

# **Russian-speaking Estonians: Bridging the Gap of Understanding**

**University of Helsinki  
Intercultural Encounters 2016-2018**

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**Abstract:** *This research explores the way in which the Russian-speaking community of Narva, Estonia perceives their identity and sense of belongingness in relation to Estonia and Russia through self-reflection. Sixteen interviews with residents of Narva reveal perceptions of discrimination and integration and the surrounding discourses on inclusion and exclusion which define and influence how Russian-speaking Estonians balance their relationship with Russian and Estonian societies. The theoretical framework is composed of psychological and sociological theories which examine the individual and social aspects involved in the relationships the interviewees describe. The research underlines the value in having a deeper understanding of minority populations along critical borders to develop appropriate and effective national-level policies which affect the community, country of residence and country of origin of the minority community. This research aims to add to the existing literature focused on the study of minority communities along critical borders in general and Russian-speaking communities spread across the Post-Soviet Space in particular as well as describe the factors that influence their mobilization and transnationalism.*

**Abstrakti:** *Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää millä tavalla venäjää puhuva yhteisö Narvassa, Virossa kokee identiteettinsä ja kuulumisensa Viroon ja Venäjään. Identiteettiä ja kuulumisen tunnetta tarkastellaan itsereflektioissa. Kuudentoista Narvassa asuvan ihmisen haastatteluiden kautta paljastetaan havaintoja heidän syrjinnästään ja integraatiostaan sekä haastatteluita ympäröiviä diskursseja sisällyttämisestä ja syrjäytymisestä, jotka vaikuttavat siihen, miten venäjänkieliset ihmiset tasapainottavat suhdettaan sekä Venäjän että Viron yhteiskuntaan. Teoreettisena viitekehyksenä on psykologisia ja sosiologisia teorioita, jotka tutkivat haastateltavien kuvaamia henkilökohtaisia ja sosiaalisia vaikutuksia suhteissansa. Tutkimus korostaa sitä, miten hyödyllistä on ymmärtää syvästi vähemmistöjä jotka asuvat kriittisillä rajoilla, jotta olisi mahdollista kehittää sopivaa ja tehokasta politiikkaa kansallisella tasolla, mikä vaikuttaa vähemmistöihin, heidän asuttamassaan maassa ja heidän alkuperäisessä kotimaassaan. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on lisätä tietoja tutkimuksen kenttiin, jotka käsittelevät vähemmistöyhteisöä kriittisillä rajoilla ja erityisesti venäjänkielisten yhteisöä, joka on levinnyt entisen Neuvostoliiton läpi sekä kuvailla tekijöitä jotka vaikuttavat heidän mobilisaatioonsa ja transnationalismia.*

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## **Section 1. Introduction**

Border conflicts are not a new or uncommon issue, particularly when discussing the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union or present-day Russia. Where Russia stops and another country begins has remained a dynamic question. Along Russia's European borders alone, recent examples of such controversies include the 2003 dispute of the Tuzla island between Russia and Ukraine, the Georgian invasion into South Ossetia in August 2008 with the subsequent recognition of Abkhazia as a "Russian occupied territory" by Georgia, and the 2014 Euromaidan controversy and Ukrainian revolution which led to the annexation of Crimea and Russia's present-day involvement in the Donbass region of Ukraine. Given this context, Russia's recent actions; expanding the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), conducting the 2017 West (Запад) large-scale military exercise or launching environmental expeditions into the Arctic have raised concern that Russia is in search of its next border incursion. Which of the 14 land-bordering countries (not to mention the additional 7 countries that share a sea border) will find itself in Russia's crosshairs next?

While many factors contributed to the above-mentioned disputes, two constants and strong indicators for future disputes are: the existence of a large population of ethnic Russians on the non-Russian side of the border and the border-country's openness towards the European Union (EU) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic Russians abroad, particularly those claiming they require protection from an oppressive host country, have given Russia cause to invoke its self-proclaimed mandate to strengthen ties with and protect ethnic Russians across the Post-Soviet Space (PSS).<sup>1</sup> This compatriot policy is Russia's way of exerting influence in the former Soviet states' domestic affairs and thus ensuring control over the region. With regards to Europe-oriented countries, even before the creation of the Soviet Union, Europe has threatened the security of the Russian Empire's borders and challenged the idea of Russianness. In Iver Neumann's book, *Russia and the Idea of Europe* he underscores the long-standing idea that Russia and Europe have been considered incompatible, summarizing the perspective of the late-1800's leading natural scientist and author of the book *Россия и Европа*, Nikolay Danilevskiy: "Since Russia and Europe are two different cultural-historical types, it is *impossible* to adapt European models to

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<sup>1</sup> For an example citing Russia's right to defend compatriots abroad is during President Putin's speech addressing Crimea's vote for separation from Ukraine. See the Washington Post article "Putin says Russia will protect the rights of Russians Abroad" published 18 March 2014.

Russian conditions” (1996, 57). The creation and expansion of NATO in 1949 further exacerbated the divide between Russia and Europe by arming Russia’s cultural and historical opponent with a unified military defense apparatus. One researcher, drawing support from Daniel Deudney and John Ikenberry’s article “The Unravelling of the Cold War Settlement”, explains that NATO has increasingly become a greater threat to Russia over the past twenty years because “NATO was perceived by Moscow to have changed its nature from a collective defence organization to a more aggressive and expansionist alliance as it latterly fought wars in the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan” (Bowker 2011, 205). The border of Russia and Europe remains a particularly contentious meeting point because the lines drawn on maps or the spheres of influence exerted by Europe and Russia over time have not only divided but also overlapped the people caught in between – a people that share culture, traditions and history with Russia but are viewed as Europeans.

### **1.1 Why Study Russian/Estonian Relations**

When returning to the question of which country might find itself facing a border dispute with Russia next, it is not surprising that many researchers, journalists and pundits have suggested that Estonia might be a likely candidate since the country borders Russia and is home to the EU’s third largest Russian-speaking population behind Germany and Latvia according to recent statistics compiled by the CIA World Fact Book (2017, 1). A large concentration of these ethnic Russians who moved to the present-day territory of Estonia live in and around the city of Narva, in the county of Ida-Virumaa on the north-eastern border of Estonia. This high percentage is due to Soviet-era migration and industry development policies. According to the Aleksanteri Institute’s Network Director of the Russian and Eastern European studies Master’s program, Tapani Kaakkuriniemi, ethnic Russians were moved beginning in the late-50s from Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia to large all-soviet factories and ports in the Baltic states and by the early 1990s they constituted 28% of Estonia’s population (2002, 133). Today, 25% of the Estonian population identifies as Russian according to official census data, with the highest concentration of them living along the border with Russia in Ida Virumaa county - between 53-73% of the Ida Virumaa and Narva population are Russian according to the Statistics Estonia 2011 and 2015 census database information (*Eesti statistika* online statistics 2011 and Loode and Poder 2015).

This high percentage suggests that if the Estonian region of Ida-Virumaa were to mobilize to support Russia it could provide significant impetus to Russia’s compatriot policy claims, perhaps resulting in a situation similar to the recent 2014 self-annexation of Crimea.

Some academics suggest that possible motivations for such a mobilization include the perception or actual occurrence of ethnic discrimination against Russian-speaking Estonians or an awakening of the Russian-speaking populations' sense of allegiance or belongingness to Russia based on their historical past, cultural similarities and shared language. From an Estonian perspective a community that has greater allegiance to Russia would constitute a formidable internal threat to its national sovereignty. The question the two governments continue to ask: Are the Russian-speaking Estonians supporters of Russia or Estonia? To discover this answer and evaluate if the Russian-speaking community does in fact play such a critical role requires an understanding of the opinions, desires and aspirations of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia, leading us to the questions of this research: Do the Russian-speaking Estonians self-identify more as a member of Estonian society or a compatriot of Russia? 2) Do Russian-speaking Estonians have a clear preference for one country over another? It is only after understanding who the Russian-Speaking Estonians consider themselves to be and their proclaimed country preference that we can draw conclusions on their potential to mobilize in support of either an Estonian or Russian national objective. Understanding the identity and the motivations of the Russian-speaking Estonian community not only serves to aid those who seek to anticipate potential conflict between Russia and Estonia, but also provides insight into questions of identity formation, cross-cultural ties and political mobilization for Russian-speaking diasporas across the PSS.

## **1.2 Applicable Fields of Research**

The approach to this research is multidisciplinary and ultimately seeks to shed light on current and relevant foreign policy discussions concerning majority/minority relations and border conflicts. This is not an in-depth review of Estonian or Russian foreign policy, rather this thesis seeks to analyze a critical component of both countries' national policies – the Russian-speaking Estonian community – through the lens of the complex-interdependence theory. In short, this theory evolved when traditional theories of realism and liberalism could not accurately explain the influence nonstate-actors or organizations could have on an entire country's foreign policy. Realism is a state-centric theory where international relations is defined as a struggle for power in which each state can only truly depend on itself for help and survival and concludes that states derive their power from their political, economic and military capabilities, which improve through the maximization of available resources (Clark 1999, 4; 150; 226). Conversely, liberalism extends the definition of key players beyond state actors to include individuals and organizations but emphasizes that the state's focus is cooperation

through interdependence, not through constant power struggle. This interdependence is achieved through politics and security as well as through cultural and economic cooperation carried out by commercial firms, organizations or individuals (Clark 1999, 31; 142-143).

The complex interdependence theory, developed by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, is similar to the realism perspective in that it still admits to a competition that exists between states that centers around power (i.e. current discussions of Russian spheres of influence vs. Estonian independence) (Rana 2015, 290). The theory however, also draws from the liberalism perspective in admitting that in some situations where countries have become interdependent, direct competition is less likely and it is rather cooperation that the two states seek to achieve to improve their individual positions: an example would be Russia using Estonia's transit capacities for exporting Russian goods to the EU while Estonia sells mechanical engineering and food industries products in the Russian market (Nevskaya 2015, 37). Most importantly, complex interdependence declares that other actors aside from the state-actors affect these international relations (Rana 2015, 290-291). Therefore, the complex interdependence theory refutes previous concepts that predictions about state actions could be based solely on the priority of a state-declared domestic or international issue, since an issue's status can be affected by outside actors such as the Russian-speaking Estonian community (Ibid., 290). Therefore, in attempting to understand who the Russian-speaking Estonians consider themselves and their sense of belongingness we may also be able to shed light on how this community might affect Estonian and Russian foreign policy.

With the starting point of this research dealing with a tomb of the Unknown Soldier<sup>2</sup> and research about Estonian/Russian nationalism and belongingness to a community, it is clear that this thesis also handles prominent and ongoing discussions within the field of Intercultural Encounters. Key among intercultural discussions is Benedict Anderson's idea of imagined communities which depict "a nation as a socially constructed community, imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group" (Anderson 2006, 6-7). This research will contribute to the study of Intercultural Encounters and expand beyond Anderson's original concept of imagined communities as it seeks to understand the self-perception that the Russian-speaking community develops when the members are unable to clearly include themselves in either the Russian or the Estonian communities. In other words, they do not belong to an

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson explains that the Unknown Soldier tombs are strong symbols of nationalism because they are "either deliberately empty or no one knows who lies inside them" but the people of each nation claim these soldiers as their own and place them into their "imagined community", no matter the actual origins of the Unknown Soldier (Anderson 2006, 9).

imagined community which aligns with only one nation-state. Although this research will take on a multi-disciplinary approach and include theories and research from other fields including geography, history, policy, border-studies, minority-studies, identity-studies and belongingness, the primary focus of analyzing how the interaction of two cultures influences the identity of a minority is deeply rooted in the field of Intercultural Encounters. Moreover, this research will seek to offer conclusions about how the study of this community could offer valuable information for developing, shaping and influencing national-level policies which is the ultimate goal of an interculturalist: seek understanding through intercultural studies and provide solutions for identified problems.

### **1.3 Previous Research**

The starting point for much of the research conducted to understand the allegiances and identity of this minority began in 2007 when the Estonian government decided to relocate a prominent Soviet-era statue, sparking heated debates and demonstrations in Estonia and Russia. This tall bronze statue, originally named “The Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn” (Монумент освободителям Таллина) during the Soviet period, was erected in 1947 in a central square of Tallinn as an addition to a previously established burial site for former soviet soldiers (Brüggemann and Kasekamp 2008, 433). Although the word “Liberators” was dropped after Estonia’s independence and the monument was eventually considered only a remembrance for those that fell in the war – a sort of tomb of the unknown soldier – the location still served as the central point of celebration each year on 9 May: Victory Day (Ibid., 433). Its relocation in 2007 was interpreted as a confrontation between Estonia’s soviet past and its aspirations to align itself more with the EU - at the time, Estonia had only been an EU member for three years. In his article published in the Journal of Baltic studies, David Smith underlines that the Estonian government’s actions were strongly tied to their efforts to recreate the Estonian national identity: “The project of nation-building in the restored Estonian Republic has been first and foremost about rejecting the Soviet past, reclaiming the historic homeland for the titular nationality and reconnecting with the ‘Western World’ following five decades of enforced isolation.” (2008, 421). The Russian government perspective however, voiced that moving the statue was a deliberate effort to erase Estonia’s soviet history fought by Estonians and Russians alike, forgetting the sacrifices that saved Estonia from German occupation during the Great Patriotic War and thus consequently expressing sympathy for fascism (Ibid., 425). Offering a third perspective, author of “Bronze Soldier goes Transnational”, Olga Davydova quotes a letter written by a teacher at Tallinn university to express a Russian-speaking



Estonians' perspective: "It was clear that for many Russian speakers the Bronze soldier was the most important symbol of their self-identification in Estonia.... The removal of the monument meant their symbolic exclusion from the society" (2008 ,405). Despite the controversy, the monument was transferred within a 48-hour period to its new location and after a few weeks, the most intense discussions, criticisms and conflicts ended.<sup>3</sup> The event however, brought to the forefront a struggle that had begun with the collapse of the Soviet Union: Estonia's efforts to integrate its ethnic Estonian and ethnic Russian society and Russia's efforts to wield influence over the minority outside of its borders.

This relocation of the Bronze statue and the subsequent protests, demonstrations and claims of oppressed identities generated considerable academic interest in researching Estonian identity, particularly Russian-speaking Estonians. Researchers were keen to determine the potential for future conflict between the citizens of Estonia as well as between the nations of Estonia and Russia. However, for the national objectives mentioned above, both Estonia and Russia have exerted significant efforts to influence the discourse on the minority population in hopes of achieving their national objectives: a mobilized and supportive diaspora for Russia and an integrated society for Estonia. As a result, many researchers underline the difficulty in distinguishing the opinions of the Russian-speaking minority from opinions generated by the Russian government through manipulation of key groups or individuals in the name of the minority.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, various Estonian surveys and programs appear similarly state-generated and elusive in describing who a Russian-Speaking Estonian is as they discuss the topic of their integration but, focus primarily on language acquisition, social status and cultural assimilation to evaluate their social integration without addressing or ascertaining the community's self-perception or sense of belongingness to either Estonia or Russia. Much of the Estonian national level research analyzes the population from a socio-economic perspective in an effort to evaluate the level of discrimination that exists between ethnic Russians and ethnic Estonians,

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<sup>3</sup> For more information on the events of the Bronze Soldier incident see: "Never-Ending Second World War: Public Performances of National Dignity and the Drama of the Bronze Soldier" (2008) by Marko Lehti, Matti Jutila and Markku Jokisipilä; "Making Sense of Nashi's Political Style: The Bronze Soldier and the Counter-Orange Community" (2011) by Jussi Lassila; and "The Bronze Soldier: Identity Threat and Maintenance in Estonia" (2009) by Martin Ehala.

<sup>4</sup> To see a more in-depth discussion of Russian influence in the reporting, representation, and assessment of the Bronze Soldier incident, see: "Bronze Soldier goes Transnational: Mediascapes and the Formation of Identities in Internet Discussions" (2008) by Olga Davydova; "'Woe from Stones': Commemoration, Identity Politics and Estonia's 'War of Monuments'" (2008) by David Smith; and "The Politics of History and the 'War of Monuments' in Estonia" (2008) by Karsten Brüggemann and Andres Kasekamp.

discussing job opportunities, social mobility and quality-of-life satisfaction.<sup>5</sup> These studies provide data about significant indicators that influence the minority's sense of belongingness, but they do not capture the personal feelings, self-declared identities or cultural connections that also affect an individual's self-perception and sense of belonging. It is however, the combination of these statistics and direct interviews with members of the community who share their personal thoughts and feelings about how they understand their identity which will allow this research to offer greater understanding of the modern-day Russian-speaking Estonian and their sense of belongingness.

A few researchers have recently focused specifically on the Russian-speaking minority and this thesis will expand on their discoveries and conclusions. In particular I will reference the research of Dr. Madli Maruste who discusses how the Russian-speaking youth's "...ethnic and national identity is influenced and shaped by the stories told to them by their parents, grandparents, teachers and last but not least the politicians" (2014, 419). I will build upon anthropologist Francisco Martinez' 2016 doctoral research titled "Wasted Legacies? Material Culture in Contemporary Estonia" in which he discusses how "Narva plays a crucial role as a mediator and juncture between distinct worlds" (2016, 57). Two studies focused specifically on identity construction and belongingness, drawing conclusions based on the combination of statistics and interviews with Russian-speakers living outside of Russia: Ammon Cheskin's research titled, "Exploring Russian-Speaking Identity from Below: The Case of Latvia" and Kristina Kallas' article "Claiming the diaspora: Russia's compatriot policy and its reception by Estonian-Russian population". While the population and historical context in Latvia differs from that in Estonia, the concepts of cross border influences, struggles of integration and personal perceptions of belongingness are relatable. Cheskin uses narratives of place to evaluate how Russian speakers can relate to both their country of residence and historical homeland. Similarly, my research seeks to understand the Narva-based Russian-speakers' dilemma between country of residence and 'historical homeland' and evaluate its impact on their self-identification. Relating how this self-determined sense of belonging is placed in context with political influences from both the Russian and Latvian governments in Cheskin's work align with my efforts to demonstrate how Estonian and Russian policies relate to identity construction and belongingness.

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<sup>5</sup> For a list of Estonian-generated reports related to statistics about the Russian-Speaking minority see publications: Statistical Yearbook of Estonia (2015), Estonian Human Development Reports (2006-2017) and Statistics Estonia: Poverty in Estonia (2010).

Political scientist Kristina Kallas, current director of Tartu University Narva College, wrote on “[...] the perceptions of the Russophones themselves and their attitudes and expectations towards Russia” (2016, 3). In particular, she focuses on “[...] attention to the civic and cultural allegiances, territorial identification and behavioral strategies of Estonian Russophones vis-à-vis Russia as the historical homeland” (Ibid., 3). Kristina Kallas’ combination of statistics and focus group interviews reveal the complexity of the Russian-speaking Estonians’ identity and sense of belongingness. Similarly, this research will expand on the concept of complexity, but will focus only on Russian-speaking Estonians that live within Ida-Virumaa. Additionally, this research will go beyond Kristina Kallas’ analysis to include discussions on the relationship between the Russian-speakers and Estonia to draw conclusions about Estonia’s role in their identity formation and belongingness.

#### **1.4 Methodology and Theories**

The primary source for the research material comes from the semi-structured interviews conducted with Russian-speaking residents from the town of Narva, Estonia. The interviews were all conducted in Narva, Estonia for three reasons: geographic closeness to Russia, the high percentage of current/former Russian citizens/ethnic Russians and the strong historical connection with the former Soviet Union and present-day Russia. The interviews are analyzed to expose common characteristics, perceptions and desires among the interviewees according to their own descriptions and explanations. This information is used to discern possible shared identity traits among the community of Russian-speaking Estonians in Narva. These shared traits will then be analyzed to determine the critical discourses according to the interviewees that influence their sense of belongingness.

Because the purpose of this research is to better understand how the community perceives itself vis-à-vis Estonia and Russia, theories will deal primarily with concepts of identity and belongingness. The study of self and identity is a topic that is multidisciplinary in and of itself. As interdisciplinary social scientist Phillip Hammack explains in the introductory chapter of the book *The Oxford handbook to Identity Formation*, “Identity is thus concerned with sameness and difference at the level of social categorization, group affiliation, and intergroup relations, as well as at the level of individual consciousness or subjectivity” (McLean and Syed 2015, 1). Since the research focuses on understanding the identity of a socially formed Russian-speaking community, a conscious decision was made to focus the analysis of identity and its construction from a psychological and social constructivist perspective (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 14). Previous researchers in this field have emphasized

the strong relationship between an individual and society in the formation of identity: “Harter describes important social influences on self-perception, and Thoits and Virshup note that the individual has an active, not passive, role in both the role-identity and social-identity formulations. Thus, self and identity are personal and social” (Ibid., 14).

Within this field, there are four leading theories: McCall and Simmons’ Role-Identity theory, Striker’s Identity theory, Tajfel’s Social Identity theory and Turner’s Self-categorization theory (Ibid., 107-119). Common among the theories is the concept of social identities, defined as

... socially-constructed and socially meaningful categories that are accepted by individuals as descriptive of themselves or their group. In essence, social identities are answers to the questions "Who am I?" or "Who are we?" when those answers refer to sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., male, African-American), group/ organizational memberships (Little League member, church member), social roles (stepfather, attorney), social types of person (intellectual, leader), and, in some cases, personality or character traits (optimist, caring) (Ibid., 106-107).

The differentiating factor between the four theories however is the amount of importance placed on role identity (“I” or “Me”) versus collectivity-based identity (“Us” or “We”). Is greater importance given to how individuals conceptualize their identity in relation to society when answering the question “who am I?” – the focus of McCall and Simmons’ Role-Identity theory and Striker’s Identity theory or when answering the question “who are we?” – the focus of Tajfel’s Social Identity theory and Turner’s Self-categorization theory. I will also draw comparisons with the work done by Phinney et. al. in the article “Ethnic Identity, Immigration, and Well-Being: An Interactional Perspective” published in *Journal of Social Issues*, where they argue that “...the interrelationship of ethnic and national identity and their role in the psychological well-being of immigrants can best be understood as an interaction between the attitudes and characteristics of immigrants and the responses of the receiving society” (Phinney et. al. 2001, 1).

Despite the theories and concepts of identity that exist, identity remains a very fluid and broad subject that is often considered constantly shifting and changing depending on the surrounding circumstances. Therefore, the purpose of this research is not to definitively state, what is the Russian-speaking Estonian identity (if such a declaration can be made). Moreover, the scope of this research would not allow for the necessary analysis of the minority population’s identity to make such a claim. Identity theories and explanations however, will be used to interpret and understand the interviewees’ perspective on how they perceive themselves and the concept of their identity according to their own descriptions. I will base my

understanding of belongingness on Marco Antonsich's concept of "place-belongingness" and "politics of belonging" ("Searching" 2010, 644). The discourses presented in the interviews will help understand the primary factors that influence their sense of belongingness. The combination of this information will allow conclusions to be drawn about who the interviewees consider themselves to be, how their environment may have influenced these perceptions, and ascertain the population's motivations and desires as they pertain to their mobilization.

### **1.5 Research Material**

The social composition of the interviewee group consisted mainly of those in the field of education (students and teachers), business (small business, real-estate and managerial positions) and customer service (hotel and food industries). These individuals were selected at random, however some parameters for selection were set by limiting the engagement area to the Tartu University Narva College campus café. This site proved ideal because it was a central meeting point for the students and faculty of the college as well as a preferred location for many young to middle-aged residents of Narva not associated directly with academia for lunch or coffee. A few interviewees were selected from outside this environment through engagement at their place of work (hotel reception) to represent locally employed members of the community. This selection process significantly reduced the likelihood of selecting interviewees that were homeless, unemployed or significantly older (age 65 or older) and generally increased the opportunity to encounter younger, more-educated residents within Narva.

All interviewees agreed to the terms of the interview<sup>6</sup> before starting and their signed consent was kept separate from their interview data. To further ensure anonymity of the participants, names were not used during the recorded interview. Instead, all notes and transcriptions of the interview were associated with a number. For interviewees who provided contact information to receive the results of this research, their personal information was not recorded or associated in any way with the recordings or transcripts of their interviews.

The interviews themselves were conducted in Russian with the exception of two interviews which were conducted entirely in English and one interview which was conducted in Russian and followed by an additional 20 minutes of discussion and follow-on comments in English. A few other interviewees would switch back and forth between English and Russian,

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<sup>6</sup> The interviewees agreed to anonymity, voluntary participation, and consent to collect and use the data for research. See Section vi for a copy of the consent forms in English and Russian.

but questions were posed in Russian. Although the primary language through which I evaluate this research is English, it is important to note two significant considerations about research involving the Russian language. Firstly, Russian is a complex and rich language which at times can be difficult to translate directly into English because certain terms and concepts are linked to Russia's long history, literature or multiethnic foundations which simply do not exist in English. As such, when a direct translation does not provide the full intended meaning of a word or phrase, additional comments will be added to support the translation. Additionally, the original Russian text for quotations will be cited in the footnotes providing the interviewees' exact words. Secondly, the interviewees were offered the opportunity to conduct the interview in Russian to allow them the ability to best express themselves, particularly given the complexity of the topic. It is therefore significant that some interviewees chose to conduct the interview in English (meaning questions were asked and answers were given in English). As researcher and author Madli Maruste suggests when discussing results of her interview-based research in Estonia, language selection provides additional indicators about the interviewee:

[...] On these occasions the question of communication language becomes important: will the interaction take place in Russian, Estonian or in some other mutually understood language? This depends on a young person's access to education. Young people, who have been able to learn different languages, often choose English language in their interactions, as English is more neutral and does not carry political connotations (2014, 419).

While we cannot conclude that those who chose English are more educated or did so to handle political topics more delicately, we can conclude that choosing English over Russian when completely immersed in a Russian-speaking environment was a conscious and deliberate decision and at least indicates comfort and familiarity with the language, suggesting that those interviewees use English on a more regular basis or perhaps interact more with those who do not speak Russian as a native language. Although conclusions cannot be drawn about what choice the interviewees would have selected had they been given the option to conduct the interview in Estonian, research conclusions from the 2012 Human Development report suggest that

The Russian-speaking population have, for their part, adopted the view that they should not use Estonian unless they speak it well, which has become a serious obstacle in linguistic integration in Estonia, reflected by the more critical self-evaluation of their competence in Estonian (2012, 123).

Many of the interviewees did express happiness that the interviews were in Russian, not Estonian, suggesting that at least in terms of comfort level, the majority of the interviewees

would have preferred to conduct the interview in Russian when choosing between that and Estonian.

Prior to conducting the research in Narva, a few Russian-speaking Estonians suggested that it would be difficult to gather information because many of the Russian-speaking Estonians, particularly those in Narva, were tired of answering official surveys, questionnaires or interviews by researchers, statisticians and government offices. Given the already historically sensitive nature of relations between Estonia and Russia, coupled with this expected interview fatigue, a conscious effort was made to engage the interviewees in a neutral and unbiased manner concerning their political leanings or personal preferences for either Estonia or Russia. The intent was to ask direct but politically unbiased questions, providing an environment where the interviewees could describe themselves and through this description reveal their preferences (political, cultural or other) and significant influencers on their self-understanding and sense of belongingness. This specifically meant that questions would not force interviewees to choose one country as better than another or determine if one country's policies (Russia's spheres of influence or Estonia's ethnicity-based citizenship for example) is politically more correct than another. Instead, questions were phrased so that interviewees could comment on certain political aspects as it pertained to the formation of their identity and sense of belongingness, giving them the opportunity to explain why they felt a certain way without feeling as if they were forced to choose sides. In some cases, this approach made it more difficult to draw conclusions about political orientation, but with the intent of this research focused primarily on self-perception of identity, belongingness and factors of mobilization, assessing political orientation was accepted as a secondary objective.

The interview questions were semi-structured and sub-divided into four sections with the first three sections structured as either yes/no or value-based (range of 1-5) and the fourth section consisted of open-ended questions. The topics of the sections were: Section 1: background information; Section 2: questions concerning self-identification and belongingness to Estonia; Section 3: belongingness to Russia; Section 4: self-identification and identification with the Russian-speaking community. Sixteen interviews were conducted with over seven hours of recorded material.<sup>7</sup>

Drawing conclusions about the entire Russian-speaking population (~326,000 according to 2018 estimates) is difficult with only sixteen interviews. However, the selection of interviewees of both genders ranging in age from 21 to 43 who are operating in both

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<sup>7</sup> See Section iv for the full questionnaire in Russian and English.

academic and non-academic environments within the town of Narva will add to the growing collection of studies aimed at providing concrete information about how the population views itself. The semi-structured interview method allowed for the comparison of some answers among the interviewees to determine percentages that might reveal trends or commonalities among the interviewees. It is important to note that interviews were conducted separately and interviewees did not interact with each other during the interview, nor did they have access to the responses of other participants.<sup>8</sup> This is particularly important when collecting answers that seemed almost identical because they support strong trends that can be used to make general assumptions about the entire interviewee group's opinion about certain topics and feelings. Additionally, the audio of the interviews was recorded for the analysis of linguistic nuances and emotional reactions not obtainable from a written survey with the help of native Russian speakers.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis of this research will be subdivided into three main sections: Section 2.0 – Identity, Section 3.0 – Belongingness and Section 4.0 – Discussions and Recommendations. Section 2.0 will discuss the interviewees perception of identity constructed from the general trends discovered from the interview data and will be presented in three subsections: How are the interviewees connected to Estonia?; How are the interviewees connected to Russia?; and how are Russian-speaking Estonians unique? Section 3.0 will discuss the interviewees' sense of belongingness and the discourses which influence their sense of inclusion and exclusion. Section 4.0 will discuss the Russian-speaking Estonian's willingness to mobilize as a result of their identity and belongingness and offer recommendations about what Russia and Estonia might learn from this research. The research will conclude with discussions about the applicability to other communities, intercultural encounters along critical borders and the policies that shape those interactions.

## **1.6 Historical Background of the Russian Speaking Population**

Finally, before discussing the results of the interviews, a short review of the region's recent history and most significant events, particularly those following the collapse of the

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<sup>8</sup> One exception to this separation between interviewees occurred when interviewee #11 heard interviewee #10 responding to Part 4, Question 5 "What makes you similar to Russians living in Russia?" and when it seemed that interviewee #10 could not think of an answer, interviewee #11 added comments such as "language" (which interviewee #10 agreed with) and "mentality" as well as other inaudible comments to which interviewee #10 did not respond. Interviewee #11 was then asked to allow interviewee #10 to continue and instead participate in the full interview process as a separate interviewee after interviewee #10.

<sup>9</sup> The native Russian speakers who contributed to the translation and interpretation of the interview data collected are ethnic Russians from Russia and are not members of the Estonian Russian-speaking community and therefore may introduce some bias with regards to language and interpretations.



Soviet Union, will help to provide the necessary context through which to understand the interviewees' responses. The historical context underscores the concepts of majority/minority dynamics, discrimination, and national politics that directly influenced the development of the Russian-speaking community. This historical reference will give context to the interviewees' responses when they explain how certain events caused them to self-identify or develop a sense of belongingness in a particular way.

The town of Narva and the surrounding region have historically wrestled with border conflicts instigated by the regional powers such as the Swedes, Germans and Russians even before it became an Estonian town. It was not until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that an independent Estonia emerged. Francisco Martinez explains that following the collapse of the Russian Empire, "the newly independent Republic of Estonia gained control over the whole town of Narva, including Ivangorod [now a part of Russia]. The line of that frontier was mutually recognised by Soviet Russia and Estonia in the Tartu Peace Treaty of 1920" (2016, 211). However, border conflicts continued and as a result of occupation by Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia during the Second World War, "artillery (mostly Soviet) devastated 98.2% of the buildings" (Ibid., 211). Following this destruction, a critical shift in demographics occurred when Soviet Russia decided to rebuild Narva as a modern socialist city populated by Russians in what Karsten Brüggemann describes in "An Enemy's 'Outpost' or 'Our West'" as a final effort to russify the *Pribaltika*. This concept of russification was deeply rooted in the former Russian Empire's approach to expansionism and was considered "an important means to prove elementarily that Russia was a European country" (2007, 89). In essence, replace the local residents of the area with Russians so that the town would inevitably develop and remain as a part of Russia.

Between the 1960s and 1990s, the Soviet government issued mandates to develop Soviet factories in Narva. This industrialization coupled with "relatively high living standards and easy access to new apartments" encouraged and at times obligated Russian-speakers from across the Soviet Union to move to Narva (Martinez 2016, 213). Given the high percentage of Russians in Narva upon the reinstatement of independent Estonia, "...Narva, and the region of Ida-Virumaa overall, were identified as a potential sources of secessionist politics" (Ibid., 213). Kiur Aarma and Raimo Jõerand's recent documentary film *Rodeo – Taming a Wild Country* recounted the significant threat Narva posed, suggesting that the demographic differences would undermine or prevent the future independence of the country (2017). In the book *Russians Beyond Russia: The Politics of National Identity*, author Niel Melvin describes the anti-Estonian sentiments within Narva during Estonia's first free elections.

On 16 and 17 July 1993, the Sovietized leadership of the northeast held a referendum on national-territorial autonomy for the region. Amid reports of major irregularities, the turnout was low (54% in Narva and 60% in Sillamae). The local government of Kohtla-Järve (an area with a 70% non-Estonian population) refused to hold the referendum. In Narva, 97% of those who voted supported autonomy, in Sillamae 98.6%. The Estonian State Court ruled the referendum illegal on 11 August 1993 (1995, 49).

Narva and Ida-Virumaa did not break away from the fledgling Estonian-state following the first free elections, but the dilemma of demographics remained an unresolved issue.

In general, the life of ethnic Russians within the Baltics became uncertain with the collapse of the Soviet Union, characterized by large doses of incredible opportunities coupled with extreme uncertainty for the future. Most notably, ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia found themselves in a particularly challenging situation, as their status was placed in question when the two newly independent countries did not automatically award citizenship to them. Rather, they were labeled foreigners in Estonia's 1993 Aliens Act (*Välismaalaste Seadus võetud 8. juulil 1993*) and non-citizens in Latvia's equivalent legislation (Cheskin 2013, 290), and in the case of Estonia, would have been deported if they did not apply for residency permits as a foreigner (Melvin 1995, 52). Two years later, the government introduced the 1995 Citizenship Act (*Kodakondsuse Seadus Vastu võetud 19. jaanuaril 1995*) which allowed permanent residents to apply for citizenship, but they were required to obtain a high level of language proficiency in Estonian. Consequently, statelessness associated with citizenship continued, resulting in many Russian-speakers living without defined citizenship, legal rights to land or property, or the ability to travel in Europe without restrictions. The challenging citizenship process seemed to be designed only to encourage Russian-speakers' emigration back to their original home of origin or force marginalization of their soviet heritage and culture. One such discouraging example is found in a report published by the Jamestown Foundation in the journal *Monitor* in 2002: "Under Estonian law, former Soviet security and military officers are not entitled to guarantees regarding citizenship, residency, pension rights and related matters" (2002, 2). Essentially, overnight a community that was once considered a majority not only became a minority and diaspora simultaneously but, was also forced to renounce their title and related benefits associated with being a citizen of the Soviet Union, leaving them searching for a new way to categorize themselves and regain the securities associated with citizenship and social inclusion.

According to research conducted by Meri-Liis Jakobson for the Interact Research Report, the Estonian government, recognizing that Russian-speaking Estonians were not

integrating by learning the Estonian language and applying for citizenship as intended in the initial 1995 Citizenship Act, worked to increase access, particularly in Narva and Ida-Virumaa, to language training and information about applying for citizenship (2013, 12). It was not until the introduction of the policy “Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007” that a coordinated effort was made by the Estonian government to increase programs and funding to improve integration, particularly through language training, in order for Russian-speakers to pass the citizenship test and begin the process of integration (Ibid., 12). Meanwhile, the Russian government made strong and public efforts to accuse Estonia of discrimination and worked to defend the Russian-speaking population by pressuring Estonia to award Russian-speakers special status or citizenship. For example, Moscow called for “‘social protection’—implying pensions and guaranteed residency rights—for former KGB officers and their families; and a halt to legal cases against former ex-Soviet military and security personnel in Estonia” (Jamestown Foundation 2002, 1). Although these requests were tied to impossible demands for immunity for “war crimes and crimes against humanity... and cessation of investigations and court cases stemming from Soviet crimes, such as mass deportations or the violent repression of anti-Soviet activities”, the fact that Russia purported to stand for better treatment of the diaspora helped Russia to maintain its paternalistic role among the Russian diaspora during this transitional period (Ibid., 2).

Although diaspora members did begin earning their citizenship and their children were born into Estonian citizenship, even after 26 years of transition, many Russian-speakers living within the diaspora have maintained strong connections with Russia through family, proximity and language. Olga Davydova references Schmidt et al., 2006 and Saunders, 2004, when she explains that the internet and its many forms of media and communication has been particularly influential in uniting the Russian-speaking diaspora around the world (Davydova 2008, 394). Nevertheless, relations between ethnic Estonians and the Russian speaking community remained relatively benign until the relocation of the Bronze Soldier in 2007 reignited tensions. As Maruste explains, “After the Bronze Soldier riots the two ethnic groups blamed each other for what had happened and the Estonian and Russian governments could find no common ground. The media of both countries, which strongly emphasized antipathetic sides of the story, added more fuel” (2014, 412).

The 26-year evolution of these PSS challenges - citizenship, language acquisition, nationality, international relations - continue to place Narva and the Russian-speaking population at the center of debates. Moreover, time has not made these issues any easier for the younger generations growing-up in this environment. Maruste emphasizes that

... on the political level the polarization between the two main ethnic groups of Estonia was played out as the root of the problem and that was reflected in young people from Estonian and Russian speaking backgrounds. They were under emotional pressure from their families to take sides on the basis of family loyalties and histories, not according to their current friends, colleagues or partners. The provocative question that was asked in the media and among people was: which side would you be on if a war started tomorrow? (2014, 413).

This research aims to give voice to this population and reveal if and how they have resolved the conflicts surrounding this border region and what they see as the answer to questions about who they are and where they belong.

## **Section 2. Who am I? Who are We?**

As explained during the discussion of identity theories presented by Ashmore and Jussim in Section 1, the study of self and identity has evolved over the past two hundred years, branching into many different disciplines. Nevertheless, there are still “three critical areas of focus within the study of identity: history, culture, and society” (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 14). What makes the interviewees’ self-perception of their identity complex is the fact that Russian-speaking Estonians share parts of all three of these aspects with both countries. This fact raises questions such as: Is their identity shaped more by Russia or Estonia, or has it become its own unique identity? To further expound on this idea, Professor Chris Weedon, chair of the Centre for Critical and Cultural Theory at the University of Cardiff and author of *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging*, underscores the complexity involved with a diaspora identity:

Diasporic communities often display multiple and hybrid identities that draw both on relatively fixed ideas of traditional culture and new hybrid identities and cultural forms – particularly among subsequent generations – that emerge from engagement with the culture and society in which the original migrants settled (2004, 105).

Weedon continues by explaining that the resultant cultural forms, practices and identities exhibited by the diaspora go against ideas of their traditional culture as well as the culture of their new environment (Ibid., 105). Given the uniqueness and complexity of such a hybrid community, it is reasonable to conclude that only those from within such a hybrid society will be able to reveal how the two parent societies have shaped their self-perception. The self-descriptions from the interviewees in this research will help describe from which parent society the social, cultural, emotional and historical influences come from and will help explain the Russian-speaking community’s view on how their identity intertwines with Russia and Estonia.

Through a comparative reconstruction of their self-perception we can determine what is too Russian or what is too Estonian according to the interviewees and by staying within these borders we can begin to understand who the Russian-speaking Estonian's consider themselves to be.

To elicit responses to help the interviewees describe this influence, the interview questions focused on: 1) What is their relationship with Estonia? and 2) What is their relationship with Russia? By providing the interviewees the opportunity to describe their own idea of their identity and then determining common trends among the responses, we can identify commonalities that unite the Russian-speaking community and likely have the greatest influence on their identity-construction.

### **2.1. What is the Relationship with Estonia?**

There are two means by which I evaluate the relationship between the interviewees and Estonia: externally and internally. The external connections between the interviewees and Estonia revolve around residency which includes aspects such as birthplace and citizenship. The first section of the interview served to collect statistical information that would help capture these external aspects. Only three of the interviewees stated that they were not born in Estonia in Part 1, Question 3 (P1, Q3). These three interviewees however, have all lived over 35 years in Estonia – equivalent to living over 89% or more of their entire lives in Estonia. Among the Estonian-born interviewees, four were older than 27 meaning that they were not born into an independent Estonia and may have had to apply for citizenship following the collapse of the Soviet Union according to the 1995 Citizenship Act.<sup>10</sup> Although only 56% of the interviewees were automatically and legally considered Estonian by birth, all but two interviewees had Estonian citizenship and possessed an Estonian passport (two of which also claimed to hold a second passport with Russian citizenship).<sup>11</sup> For the two individuals who did not hold an Estonian passport/citizenship, one held a grey passport<sup>12</sup> and the second held a

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<sup>10</sup> No additional questions were asked to determine if Estonian citizenship was automatic or requested for these four interviewees.

<sup>11</sup> The scope of this research did not allow for further investigation into the legalities of dual passports or citizenship.

<sup>12</sup> According to the research completed by Francisco Martinez in 2016, "Roughly 100 000 Estonian Russians carry a special grey passport that labels them as 'alien'. This status complicates getting a job and does not allow one to vote in national elections. Most of the holders are elderly people. Between 2008 and 2011, the number of holders dropped from 110 000 to 97 800. 48% of the total due to death; those who obtained Estonian citizenship made up 28 percent of the figure, and those who took other citizenship accounted for 23 percent. (2016, 207-208) For additional information on the grey passport issue, reference the "Estonian Integration Monitoring Summary" (2011) by Marju Lauristin, the INTERACT Research Report "Integration Policy Instruments in

Russian passport. All of the interviewees answered that they reside permanently in Estonia (all but two of the interviewees have lived in Estonia their entire life).

These results support the statistics which indicate that the current day population of Russian-speaking Estonians (particularly those 45 years or younger) have lived a majority of their life in independent Estonia. This is in contrast to the previous generation of the Russian-speaking emigre population that arrived in Soviet-controlled Estonia between the end of WWII and the 1980s, held soviet citizenship and did not require a knowledge of Estonian language or culture to function on a daily basis (Evas and Väljataga, 14). The percentage of interviewees holding a grey passport (6% of the interview population) is also in-line with the national level statistics of total grey passport holders in Estonia (just over 6%) and underlines the steady decrease of “people with undetermined citizenship” originally identified in 1992 (33% of the 1992 Estonian population).<sup>13</sup> These statistics underline the dynamics of generational change which has occurred over the past 26 years in Narva where an increasing percentage of the population has lived more than 50% of their life in the independent country of Estonia. In particular, younger Russian-speaking Estonians have more tangible external ties with Estonia than older Russian-speakers and Russian-speakers under the age of 25 have personally only known Estonia as an independent country.

### **Residency**

The fact that the interviewees have resided in Estonia either their entire life or a majority of their adult life is, in and of itself, a strong external influence on their relationship with Estonia and consequently a strong influence on their self-perception. In some way they have always been associated with Estonia, particularly more so than the generation before them that lived the majority of their adult life in the Soviet Union, unattached from the notion of being connected to Estonia or the Estonian people (even if they were living on the territory that is now present-day Estonia). A life-long association with Estonia however, does not necessarily equate to a greater tendency for assimilation or integration. Initial theories in assimilation state that, “In the case of immigrants and their descendants who may not intentionally seek to assimilate, the cumulative effect of pragmatic decisions aimed at successful adaptation can give rise to changes in behavior that nevertheless lead to eventual assimilation” (Alba and Nee 2003,

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Estonia” (2013) by Mari-Liis Jakobson, and the “Mapping Statelessness in Estonia” report (2016) by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR).

<sup>13</sup> According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) 2016 “Mapping Statelessness in Estonia” report, “the size of this population [grey passport holders] has decreased considerably, from around 500,000 in 1992, to around 82,000 in 2016.” (2016, 95) However, according to the “Narva in Figures” 2013 Report, 15% of Narva’s population was made up of grey passport holders. (Vylitok 2013, 9)

39). But modern theories of assimilation suggest that a more predictive aspect in assimilation is the “social distance” between the individuals assimilating and the society into which they are assimilating where social distance is considered, “the subjective state of ‘nearness felt to certain individuals,’ not physical distance between groups” (Ibid., 31). Theorists Tomatsu Shibutani and Kian Kwan, according to Alba and Nee, explain that:

When social distance is small, there is a feeling of common identity, closeness, and shared experiences. But when social distance is great, people perceive and treat the other as belonging to a different category; and even after long acquaintance, there are still feelings of apprehension and reserve” (Ibid., 32).

Therefore, we cannot determine if this demographic shift (by birth, citizenship and residency) in “native Russian-speaking Narvans” over the past 26 years is a positive or negative one without supporting comments from the interviewees on how this relationship has affected their perception of social distance within Estonian society.

Exploring the responses to the open-ended questions in which interviewees expressed in their own words their connections to Estonia, the concepts of residency, citizenship and time in Estonia are cited as reasons for how they feel and relate to Estonia, and generally indicate a sense of familiarity with the country. When asked “What makes you similar to Estonians?”, interview #1 stated “[our] place of residence”<sup>14</sup> and interview #7 explained, “because I’m not purely “Russian-Russian from Russia – I live here...My family is Russian-speaking, but none of us have been to Russia, meaning we haven’t lived there. It means I’m from Estonia.”<sup>15</sup> A preference for living in Estonia was extremely common among the interviewees and was described as a result of a greater sense of familiarity which encompassed feelings of comfort and safety with the Estonian way of life. Interviewee #4 stated, “I like Estonia, I live well here. And I want to stay here to live.”<sup>16</sup> Interviewee #15 underlined multiple times throughout the interview that perhaps in the days of the Soviet Union life was better for Russian-speakers however, when answering what he holds in common with Estonians he said, “Well probably that we want to live here in Estonia. In peace, in happiness, and as they say in friendship. I want it just as Estonians want it too, I’m sure.”<sup>17</sup> Interviewee #13 and #14 used some of the strongest language when describing this relationship, bordering on patriotism, although the

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<sup>14</sup> “место проживания” (Interviewee #1, P4, Q3)

<sup>15</sup> “потому что я не чисто русская-русская из России – я живу здесь... Моя семья русскоязычная, но никто из нас в России не был, ну то есть не не был, а не жил там. То есть я из Эстонии” (Interviewee #7, P4, Q3)

<sup>16</sup> “Мне нравится Эстония, я здесь хорошо живу. И хочу здесь остаться жить.” (Interviewee #4, P4, Q3)

<sup>17</sup> “ну наверное то, что мы хотим жить в этой Эстонии. В мире, в счастье и как говорится, в дружбе. Я этого хочу, просто эстонцы тоже этого хотят, я уверен.” (Interviewee #15, P4, Q3)

word itself is not used. Interviewee #13 said, “*Probably we love our country, that’s why we live here.*”<sup>18</sup> and interviewee #14 comments, “*Love for my own country, in which I live.*” In almost all of the positive responses, the interviewees cited strong feelings towards Estonia because of a desire to reside in “their own country”.

The conclusion that they were not just residents of Narva, but of Estonia and in a few cases underlining that they were residents of Europe, seems to contradict what Martinez concludes during his investigation into border concepts where his Narvan interviewees described residing in Narva as something altogether unique:

“Narva is neither Europe, nor Russia; Narva is the border”, Tatyana concludes.... Tatyana is right. Narva and Ivangorod are neither Europe nor Russia, they belong to the border and create a distinct milieu with its own normality and way of constructing identity (2016, 208).

While Narva is indeed a uniquely located town, the fact that in this research interviewees would still consider themselves residents of Estonia and Europe suggests that a positive and relatively strong relationship exists between them and these larger social organizations.

Not all respondents however, agreed that the relationship with Estonia is positive with regards to residency. Reference to citizenship and passports during the question “What makes you similar to Estonians?” by two interviewees suggested a negative association. Interviewee #2 said, “*Just this, that I have a passport, an Estonian passport*”<sup>19</sup> Respondent #6 is the only interviewee with a grey passport and her answer was simply, “*common country, land, state.*”<sup>20</sup> Interviewees #2 and #6 seemed to be in opposition to positive ties with Estonia based on their short (the shortest among all the respondents) and direct responses. Without further questioning, it is unsure whether these comments are directly linked to the controversial aspect of Estonian citizenship and passport requirements, particularly the issuance of grey passports but, interviewee #2’s reference to the Estonian passport and interviewee #6’s reference to the Estonian government (*государство*) suggest that if a relationship exists between them and Estonia, than perhaps it relies more on mandatory bureaucratic requirements than a love for their country of residence. They seemed to have no other positive associations with Estonia, underscoring a weaker relationship and indicating that for some residents, the social distance between them and Estonian society remains large.

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<sup>18</sup> “наверное, мы любим свою страну, поэтому мы живем здесь.” (Interviewee #13, P4, Q3)

<sup>19</sup> (Interviewee #2, P4, Q3)

<sup>20</sup> “общая страна, земля, государство” (Interviewee #6, P4, Q3)



Keeping social scientist Phillip Hammack's definition of identity discussed in Section 1.4 "Methodology and Theories" in mind and looking at the interviewees' group affiliation, the strongest tie between the interviewees and Estonia was observed in residency. Residency is supported by a number of bureaucratic processes to include citizenship, passports, and official registration. The interviewees' responses revealed that on a personal level, this connection is almost exclusively tied to Estonia with only three of the participants being born outside of Estonia and only two interviewees holding non-Estonian passports. This life-long association with the country earned Estonia the title of "homeland" or place of origin for many of the interviewees. We can therefore conclude that the Russian-speaking Estonians, despite their differences with ethnic Estonians, identify themselves as part of the larger group who considers Estonia their physical home. These results are in-line with statistics highlighted during Kristina Kallas' 2016 research:

[...] the surveys testify to a strong territorial identification with Estonia among Estonian-Russians where the overwhelming majority of them identify Estonia as their only homeland....Territorial identification with Estonia is noticeable even among those who were born in Russia - nearly a quarter of this group considers Estonia as their only homeland (2016, 13).

Professor Weedon adds however, that belongingness to a group, in this case through residency, does not occur only because interviewees associate themselves with others who consider Estonia "home", but also because their identity is in part "socially, culturally and institutionally assigned..." (2004, 6) Weedon elaborates on this externally assigned identity by stating,

In the case of citizenship, an elaborate bureaucracy monitors and allocates the markers of citizenship, for example, birth certificates, passports and electoral registers. National anthems, sung at official state occasions and at cultural and sports events, seek to recruit subjects, drawing on emotional as well as rational forms of identification in order to interpellate individuals as citizens of a particular nation. In the cases of both gender and national identity, a wide range of social practices come into play in recruiting subjects to identify with the identities on offer (2004, 6).

The fact that the interviewees regard Estonia as their only homeland coupled with institutionally assigned "markers" (passports, birth certificates, etc.) designed to identify and unify an Estonian nation have caused the interviewees to categorize themselves as Estonian with regards to residency. Even those interviewees who asserted strong connections to and influence from Russia (Interviewees #2 and #6) could not ignore the fact that part of who they are, at least with regards to residency, is Estonian. It is true that the interviewees could choose to change aspects of their residency by moving or seeking a passport from another country (although institutionally assigned identity markers can prove bureaucratically challenging to

alter), it would be hard to completely erase a relationship that has been established over a life time and one that is intertwined with many other aspects of life (for example Estonian social services, travel rights as a European citizen, or a free education system). Overall, this external association was described as being somewhere between neutral and extremely positive.

### **Social and Cultural Characteristics**

Turning now to internal influences, I evaluate how the interviewees described Estonia’s influence on their thoughts and feelings concerning self-perceptions, personal perspectives, cultural values and social interaction. Although many questions within the interview elicited responses which addressed various aspects of these internal influences, two interview questions specifically sought to evoke descriptions of how the interviewees’ viewed this relationship (P2, Q1 and P4, Q1). From these questions, common themes are identified and are subsequently searched for their reoccurrence in other questions throughout the interview.

For the question, “Which phrase best describes you?” (P2, Q1), interviewees were provided a list of five available responses (see [Table 1](#)). The audio review of this question reveals that in all but two of the responses to this question, the answer was given definitively without equivocation or pausing for longer than about five seconds before deciding. Interestingly, none of the interviewees offered a sixth description to better capture how they would define themselves. What is important from this question is that a total of 87% of the respondents chose an answer that was in some way linked to being at least partly Estonian. Another way to view this response is to recognize a strong sense of duality – a combination of Russianness *AND* Estonianness – which we will discuss in detail in Section 2.3: “Who is a Russian-Speaking Estonian?”.

<b>Table 1: Part 2, Question 1 “Which phrase best describes you?”</b>	
Russian ( <i>Русский</i> )	13%
Estonian ( <i>Эстонский</i> )	13%
Russian-speaking Estonian ( <i>русскоязычный Эстонский</i> )	13%
Estonian citizen with Russian ethnicity ( <i>гражданин Эстонии с русской этнической принадлежностью</i> )	31%
Both Russian and Estonian ( <i>Русский, и Эстонский</i> )	31%

Part 4, Question 1 was open-ended: “What is your national identity in your own words? How would you describe your identity?” Although the question itself assumes that the interviewees have an understanding of a rather broad and complex concept of “national identity” and how it manifests itself, the intent of this question was not about evaluating interviewees’ understanding of theory, rather to determine which of the interviewees would connect their perception of identity to Estonia of their own accord and in what way. During

this section, only three respondents listed “Estonian” (*Эстонский/ая*) as a descriptor of their national identity in the first two sentences. Some of the interviewees would not name either Russia or Estonia as a descriptor of their national identity: Interviewee #12 said, *“I feel that both choices are absolutely the same to me as far as who I am by nationality.”*<sup>21</sup> And interviewee #16 said, *“Well, my first thought, what comes to mind first is that I really don’t consider myself to be any specific nationality.”*<sup>22</sup> Half of the respondents cited Russian as their nationality in the first sentence. However, it is important to note that from all the interviews in which a country was named while describing their identity, only two interviewees did not provide additional comments and explanations connecting their identity in some way to both Estonia and Russia. For example, Interviewee #6 said, *“I am a Russian who lives in Estonia”*<sup>23</sup>, and interviewee #7 explained that *“Well, how can I say this, I’m sort of Russian, but I live in Estonia”*.<sup>24</sup> However, as interviewees #5 and #9 underlined, even these short descriptions were not sufficient enough to explain the relationship: Interviewee #5 said, *“This is a difficult question because there is no definitive answer to it.”*<sup>25</sup> and interviewee #9 stated, *“I ...I don’t consider myself more Russian or Estonian.”*<sup>26</sup> In almost every case, the interviewees elaborated on their initial one or two-word descriptions of their identity, moving past the terms “Estonian” (*эстонский/ая*) or “Russian” (*Русский/ая*) by describing their identity as a combination of something Russian and Estonian. It is at this point in the interview when concrete examples began to appear. Although the interviewees had begun to mention that a relationship existed between them and Estonia when responding during the first three parts of the interview, part four served as the catalysts for the interviewees to begin explaining in what ways this relationship took shape in their thoughts and actions.

The interviewees used the following terms to describe personal attributes that they felt made them at least partly Estonian: quiet (*спокойные/ тихо*), reserved (*сдержанные*), secretive (*скрытные*), closed (*замкнутые*) and individualistic (*индивидуалистично*). (P4, Q1) With regards to the terms secretive and closed, the respondents themselves referred to the cultural stereotypes for which Estonians are considered to be socially more distant than people in Western Europe. Interviewee #10 explained that, *“Initially, it is very difficult for us to start*

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<sup>21</sup> “Я чувствую, что мне абсолютно все равно, кто я по национальности.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q1)

<sup>22</sup> “Но мысль сразу, что первая пришла, что я на самом деле не отношу себя к какой-то конкретной национальной.” (Interviewee #16, P4, Q1)

<sup>23</sup> “я русская, которая живет в Эстонии” (Interviewee #6, P4, Q1)

<sup>24</sup> “ну как сказать, я вроде как и русская, но живу в Эстонии” (Interviewee #7, P4, Q1)

<sup>25</sup> “Это сложный вопрос, потому что однозначного ответа на него все-таки нет.” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q1)

<sup>26</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q1)

a relationship’’<sup>27</sup>. Interviewee #12 did comment that perhaps the preference towards being soft spoken or more silent might also be related to education level, not just cultural affiliations.<sup>28</sup> Interviewee #9 explained that perhaps the best way to understand the Estonian influence is that the people of Narva have become more “individualized” over time, particularly when compared to Russians in Russia who appear to prefer a more “collectivist” approach to social interaction.<sup>29</sup>

### **Mentality**

In addition to their personal characteristics and social preferences, the interviewees underlined that their mental approach to many aspects of life has increasingly fallen more in line with an Estonian or European way of thinking and includes a greater preference for order and rules. For example, interviewee #5 stated: “Mentally, I am already a westerner”<sup>30</sup> and interviewee #14 says: “I consider myself to be Russian, living according to...having the mentality of an Estonian. That is, since I happen to speak Russian, I speak Russian, but I live as an Estonian, as a European.”<sup>31</sup> Interviewee #9 also underlined the influence and preference for order: “The way... things are done, or business is done is very strict in, in Estonia. It’s more like German.”<sup>32</sup> Interviewee #9’s response has two potential interpretations: order and preference is more European (i.e. German) or there are still historical traces of German cultural influence from the period of German governing and settling prior to Estonia’s inclusion in the Soviet Union.<sup>33</sup> Interviewee #12 also suggests a preference for this Estonian way of thinking on a daily basis: “In my house, there is probably a more Estonian way of organizing than a Russian one”.<sup>34</sup>

Although many interviewees commented on sharing a mentality with Estonians, interviewee #5 provided the most detail about how the Estonian mentality manifested itself within the Russian-speaking community in the form of preference for rules and order.

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<sup>27</sup> “нам тяжело очень с человеком на первом этапе начать отношения.” (Interviewee #10, P4, Q1)

<sup>28</sup> (Interviewee #12, P4, Q3)

<sup>29</sup> (Interview #9, P4, Q3)

<sup>30</sup> “но ментальность у меня уже западного человека.” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q1)

<sup>31</sup> “я считаю себя русским, живущим по..., имеющим менталитет как бы Эстонии. То есть как бы я говорю по-русски, я говорю по-русски, но живу я по-эстонски, по-европейски.” (interviewee #14, P4, Q1)

<sup>32</sup> (Interview #9, P4, Q3)

<sup>33</sup> For more information concerning German influence in Estonia reference Karsten Brüggemann’s *Narva Und Die Ostseeregion: Beiträge Der II. Internationalen Konferenz Über Die Politischen Und Kulturelle Beziehungen Zwischen Russland Und Der Ostseeregion, Narva, 1-3 Mai 2003 = Narva and the Baltic Sea Region: Papers Presented at the II International Conference on Political and Cultural Relations between Russia and the Baltic Region States.*

<sup>34</sup> “В моем доме наверное больше эстонского в организации быта, чем русского.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q3)

*... This style of developing here. It's absolutely Estonian. And only because of that, some interesting projects like this [referring to the new Narva college building] was able to be made here .... I love this style, there are a lot of things in Estonian mentality that I don't understand. ...the music is soft, the talking, talk is soft it's like not so deep. It's another story, but what is about business, absolutely is 100 percent [Estonian].*<sup>35</sup>

Interviewee #5 explained that this Estonian and European mental approach to business specifically refers to avoiding corruption, bribes or applying political pressure to achieve results.<sup>36</sup> As one of the older interviewees (33 years old), interviewee #5 also commented on how the mentality has changed over the past 20 years in Narva. *"...the present generation that I see, it's my, it's like me or a bit younger, [or] a bit older, they understand this Estonian mentality. They are more Estonian than even me."*<sup>37</sup> Interviewee #5 elaborated on what Estonian mentality means and stated, *"Estonians are pickier about details. Russians, in their mentality, they reason about broader concepts, broader notions. That is to say, pickiness to details, this is more typical of Estonians."*<sup>38</sup> One final quote about mentality from interview #5 is worth citing as it is similar to a separate description provided by interviewee #10. In responding to Part 4, Question 7 "In your opinion, what are the top three issues that most concern someone living in Nava or Ida-Viru county?" interviewee #5 offers an explanation as to why Russian-speakers in Narva are adopting this Estonian mentality in business:

*... we do business here like in Russia. This means that it is first done, and then it is considered. And this is not right. This is why there is an economic center there [Tartu, Tallinn, Pärnu], they first consider it, and then they do it. Here things are done like in Russia, almost the opposite way, and this is what distinguishes us, and this is sometimes why we do not manage to live well here. This almost German accuracy, it is the Estonians, it is not in the Russians. And because of this, there is some envy that Estonians live better. But they live better, because they have these qualities.*<sup>39</sup>

While answering a separate question, Interviewee #10 provided an anecdote from a project that involved youth visiting Narva from Saint Petersburg, Russia and the

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<sup>35</sup> (Interview #5, Additional Comments, Lines 275-292)

<sup>36</sup> (Interview #5, Additional Comments, Lines 244-270)

<sup>37</sup> (Interview #5, Additional Comments, Lines 310-311)

<sup>38</sup> "Эстонцы более придирчивы к деталям. Русские в менталитете, они рассуждают более широкими понятиями, более широкими обозначениями. То есть придирчивость к деталям, это более свойственно эстонцам." (Interviewee #5, P4, Q2)

<sup>39</sup> "... у нас здесь бизнес ведется по-русски. Это значит, что сперва делается, а потом считается. И это неправильно. Это то, почему там есть экономический центр, там сперва считают, а потом делают. Здесь делается по-русски, немножко, с другой стороны. И это то, что нас отличает, и это то, почему иной раз у нас здесь не получается жить так же хорошо. Эта почти немецкая точность, она есть у эстонцев, ее нет у русских. И есть из-за этого какая-то зависть, из-за того, что эстонцы живут лучше. Но они живут лучше, потому что они обладают этими качествами." (Interviewee #5, P4, Q7)

subsequent observations made from a drawing exercise given to the students from both countries.

*And we Estonians, we must always, for example, think before we do something. If we write this, then what will happen if we draw. And here came the students from Petrograd. And the assignment was given - the St. Petersburg people did everything at once, and we are - oh, we are real Estonians, we need to first think about it. And they - first do, then think.*<sup>40</sup>

Two points can be made from the comparison of these strikingly different situations. Firstly, the similarity in describing “doing, then thinking” seems to occur in both adult and child environments, implying that it is indeed a “way of thinking” about life in general. Secondly, the young age of the children in the second scenario suggests that this mentality develops early and therefore is more likely to be present among those born into such an environment where their way of thinking is shaped from childhood. Interviewee #11’s comment about mentality also references aspects of the earlier discussion about time in Estonia and the impact it has had on mentality: “*well I think the mentality, the intellect is already different, because we grew up with it.*”<sup>41</sup> These explanations of mental similarities with Estonians provide greater support to the previous conclusion that those in the Russian-speaking community who have lived longer in independent Estonia have a smaller social distance with Estonian society.

Without delving into a complete linguistic analysis on each interviewee’s use of personal pronouns, it is worth noting, particularly from a psychological perspective, that the interviewees consistently transitioned from the use of “I” to “we” when describing their characteristics, attributes, traditions, perceptions and beliefs. Interview #10’s above response provides a clear example of this shift where, initially responding to the question “What makes you different from Estonians?” interviewee #10 stated, “*...I would not say that anything distinguishes **me**.*”<sup>42</sup> But only one sentence later continued, “*And **we Estonians, we must always, for example, think before we do something.***”<sup>43</sup> The shift from individual to collective self-referencing supports the claim that broader conclusions about the Russian-speaking

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<sup>40</sup> “у нас было такое, что я занимался молодежными проектами и у нас приехали ребята из Питера. И мы эстонцы мы всегда должны, допустим, подумать, прежде чем что-то сделать. Если мы напишем это, то что будет, если мы нарисуем. И приехали вот питерцы. И дали задание – питерцы сразу все сделали, и мы такие – о, мы настоящие эстонцы, нам надо сначала подумать. А они – сначала сделать, потом подумать.” (Interviewee #10, P4, Q2)

<sup>41</sup> “ну я думаю, менталитет, интеллект уже немножко другой, потому что мы росли с этим.” (Interviewee #11 P4, Q4)

<sup>42</sup> “да я бы не сказал, что меня что-то отличает.” (Interviewee #10, P4, Q2)

<sup>43</sup> “И мы эстонцы мы всегда должны, допустим, подумать, прежде чем что-то сделать.” (Interviewee #10, Q2, P4)

community can be drawn from these interviews since the interviewees speak on behalf of the community. More importantly, the shift indicates that the interviewees consider themselves a part of a larger group – Estonian society – when it comes to exhibiting social behaviors and mental preferences for discretion, silence, reflection and order; another support for the impact of group affiliation on identity formation as outlined by Phillip Hammack (McLean and Syed 2015, 1).

This self-inclusion and social alignment with the larger Estonian society also provide substantial support for Turner's theory on socially influenced self-categorization as a result of cognitive alignment between the individuals and a larger social organization to which they ascribe (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 118). Ashmore and Jussim explain that "Turner's emphasis is on group relations as a product of self-categorization [...where the] main goal is to explain how collective identification occurs" (Ibid., 118-119). The authors argue that Turner's primary point is that "individuals think and act in group-characteristic ways... less because of human needs or motivations and more because they are cognitively identified with the group" (Ibid., 118-119). Turner's perspective on identity offers three factors that influence the likelihood of such self-inclusion: the relative accessibility of a category, its normative fit, and its comparative fit (Ibid., 118).

The authors of *Self and Identity* further cite Turner stating, "relative accessibility is the individual's 'readiness' to use the category, based on 'past experience, present expectations, and current motives, values, goals, and needs'" (Ibid., 118). As the discoveries about residency indicated, the number of bureaucratic processes and individual rights tied to living in Estonia demanded a greater interaction with Estonia, an understanding of Estonian procedures and cooperation with Estonian authority to achieve personal and professional objectives. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Estonian government has persistently tied Estonian citizenship and residency with an expectation to integrate into Estonian society through the 1993 Aliens Act, the 1995 Citizenship Act and subsequent integration programs, thus emphasizing through past experiences and current expectations a need to value Estonian social and mental characteristics.<sup>44</sup> As another example, interviewee #5 explained that residents of Narva are increasingly considering themselves more western-oriented with regards to mentality

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<sup>44</sup> Estonian Citizenship Act 1995, Section 8 states, "the proficiency requirements in the Estonian language for a person who wants to acquire Estonian citizenship are the following: 1) the applicant is able to cope in most everyday situations and 3) the applicant is able to fully understand the gist on familiar topics such as work, school and leisure." (1995, 3-4)

in an effort to improve the status and future possibilities of Narva and Ida-Virumaa, particularly in comparison with other industrial centers in Estonia.<sup>45</sup>

Turner's comparative fit "reflects the degree to which the individual perceives fewer differences on relevant categorical characteristics among 'us' than between 'us' and others (Turner et al., 1987); this is also called 'the principal of meta-contrast'" (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 118). While responding to the question, "What makes you similar to Estonians?", interviewee #9 verbally walked through this "meta-contrast" process of comparison by first identifying a characteristic, identifying the "us" and the "other" aspect of that characteristic, conducting a self-examination, determining which group had fewer differences from interviewee #9's own personal assessment, and then self-aligning with said group:

*Some... cultural...things. Russian and Estonian cultures are very different. One is individualized, another is collectivist cultures. So yes, I'm more private I guess. I don't like to communicate much. So...so I guess the social part is more Estonian in me.*<sup>46</sup>

Interviewee #9 paused often when making the comparison between Russian, Estonian and personal characteristics, suggesting that this was perhaps the first time consciously making the comparison or at least sharing the conclusions of such a comparison out loud. The hesitation is also evidence that the answer was not an immediate, obvious or clear one. Interviewee #12 also admits a preference for forming societal bonds based on commonalities versus national origin when reflecting on identity:

*I would also like now, not to perceive other people on the basis of their nationality. Rather, to consider them from the standpoint of whether this person is close to me, whether he is interesting to me and whether I can learn something from him.*<sup>47</sup>

Even when interviewees were unable to identify the exact attribute that drew them closer to Estonians, interviewee #7 suggested that there was a recognition that they were somehow closer behaviorally to Estonians than Russians: "And of course, it is somehow in my behavior, it seems, something is there, more from Estonians."<sup>48</sup>

The strongest argument for Turner's theory given the interviewees' responses concerning behaviors and mentalities is the normative fit: "the degree to which the stimuli in

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<sup>45</sup> (Interview #5, Additional Comments, Lines 165-173)

<sup>46</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q3)

<sup>47</sup> "и не воспринимать других людей тоже исходя из их национальности. А рассматривать их с точки зрения, близок ли мне этот человек, интересен ли он мне и могу ли я чему-то научиться у него." (Interviewee #12, P4, Q1)

<sup>48</sup> "И, конечно, это в поведении моем как-то, наверное, проявляется, что-то есть такое, более от эстонцев." (Interviewee #7, P4, Q3)



the context match normative stereotypes or beliefs about the comparison criterion or category that is being applied” (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 118). Put in other terms, how well do the interviewees’ descriptions of their own characteristics and preferences align with the perceptions and stereotypes of either Estonian or Russian characteristics and preferences? Almost every description above underlines the perception that Estonians are quieter, socially more distant, and mentally more European than Russians. When given a choice between aligning themselves with one social group or the other, their normative fit was much closer to Estonians, leading to a general ascription to Estonian society with regards to behavior and mental preferences.

While other similarities with Estonians presented themselves throughout the interview (religious identity or holiday celebrations), only the social and mental preferences discussed met all three of Turner’s criteria which according to Ashmore and Jussim causes “a psychologically active or salient influence” - an activation of these traits among the members of the community in everyday life (Ibid., 118). A comparison with Turner’s theory on collective identification formation and the clear presence of relative accessibility, normative fit, and comparative fit suggests that the majority of the interviewees consider themselves “Estonian” with regards to social and mental preferences exhibited on a daily basis.

In an effort to determine in what other ways the interviewees related to Estonians, two questions asked the interviewees to clarify where they draw the line between them and those they perceive as ethnic Estonians: “What makes you similar to Estonians and what makes you different from Estonians?” (P4, Q2 and Q3). These questions were also open-ended and while the answers further supported the concept of duality – a desire to state they exhibited both Russian and Estonian characteristics – one common factor surfaced by which the majority of the interviewees evaluated their relationship with Estonia: language.

### **Language**

The question “What makes you different from Estonians?” was most frequently met with the response: language. For example, interviewee #1 underlined the fact that Estonian was not “*my native language*.”<sup>49</sup> while interviewee #2 referenced her inability to use the language, “*First of all, I cannot speak Estonian.*”. Interviewee #3 cited unfamiliarity with the language, “*Knowledge of the Estonian language.*”<sup>50</sup> and interviewee #14 simply referred to the language as an inhibitor, “*The only barrier is the language.*”<sup>51</sup>. The Estonian language is an aspect

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<sup>49</sup> “мой родной язык” (Interviewee #1, P4, Q2)

<sup>50</sup> “Знание эстонского языка” (Interviewee #3, P4, Q2)

<sup>51</sup> “Единственный барьер – это язык.” (Interviewee # 14, P4, Q2)

which demands significant attention because it was a vital method by which the interviewees established the line that seemed to indicate the greatest separation between themselves and those they considered Estonian. In response to Part 4, Question 2, 56% (9 out of 16) of the interviewees cited language as the first factor distinguishing them from Estonians.

Returning to the statistics collected at the beginning of the interview, Part 1, Question 6 was designed to determine what linguistic ties the interviewees held with Estonia: “What is the language you use most often for your everyday activities and how well do you speak/understand Russian, Estonian and English?” The primary language for all respondents was Russian, with only three individuals commenting that they used both Russian and Estonian for everyday activities. When the respondents were asked to provide a self-assessment of how well they spoke Estonian (see [Table 2](#)), the average level was 3.5 (between the descriptions of sufficiently well and very well). In addition to this specific language question, multiple times throughout the entire interview process interviewees referenced the role of the Estonian language across a spectrum of issues. This repeated reference underlines the critical role language plays in determining the strength of the relation between the interviewees and Estonia. Moreover, although language is viewed as a significant distinguishing factor between ethnic Estonians and the interviewees, the perception of the Estonian language was not always presented as negative.

<b>Table 2: Self-assessed Language Fluency</b>			
	Estonian	Russian	English
<b>5 – Fluent/Native</b>	13%	100%	6%
<b>4 – Very well</b>	31%	0%	19%
<b>3 – Sufficiently well</b>	50%	0%	31%
<b>2 – Basic level</b>	6%	0%	44%
<b>1 – Not at all</b>	0%	0%	0%

Interviewees #1, #2, #3, #9, #11, #13 and #16 all referenced language when responding to Part 2, Question 4, “In your opinion, is there a noticeable difference in concerns about domestic economic problems from Russian-speaking Estonians and Estonians within Narva and Ida-Viru county (Yes or No). If so, what are those differences?” This question was originally intended to identify if Russian-speaking Estonians and ethnic Estonians prioritized economic difficulties differently. For example, Russian-speakers felt the government should apply funds to improve housing subsidies while ethnic Estonians believed funds should be used

to increase the national minimum wage. However, the wording confused many interviewees and based on the responses given, the question was interpreted by the interviewees as, “What are the socio-economic differences between Russian-speaking Estonians and ethnic-Estonians?” When answering their interpretation of the question, language presented itself as a central factor. Interviewee #16 explained that there is an economic difference between Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians and it revolves around Russian-speakers’ grasp of Estonian: *“Yes there is. It is the problem of knowing the Estonian language.”*<sup>52</sup> Interviewees #2, #3, #9 and #13 supported this claim. Interviewee #3 explained that the Estonian language played a vital role in employment when Russian-speakers want to find a job, *“I know that in general in Estonia, it is so that if you are an Estonian, but you do not speak Russian, than most likely you will hire a Russian who speaks Estonian.”*<sup>53</sup> Interviewee #2’s comments support Interviewee #3’s claim: *“Priority is given to those who speak Estonian.”*<sup>54</sup> While interviewee #9 stated, *“I think that being able to speak Estonian here fluently gives you more opportunities to find a job.”*<sup>55</sup> Interviewee #13 also agreed that the Estonian language was one explanation as to why some Russian-speakers were able to advance within the job market; *“And the Russians’ [status] is always lower, and the salary is different, and the position is different. But again, we have many Russians who have learned Estonian and have progressed very well.”*<sup>56</sup> In response to this question, not all interviewees viewed the Estonian language positively. Interviewees #1 and #11 emphasized that there is an unbalanced focus on the Estonian language at the risk of marginalizing the Russian-speakers: *“In Estonia, most of the Estonians and the whole state is focused on studying the Estonian language and they treat the Russians...well, it’s not very good.”*<sup>57</sup> (Interviewee #1) or *“There are those who do not speak Russian and this is very important. It is still necessary.”*<sup>58</sup> (Interviewee #11) Despite the concern that focus on the Estonian language is oppressing linguistic needs to speak and practice Russian, none of the interviewees disputed the fact that learning Estonian provides greater opportunities to Russian-speakers, particularly with regards to employment opportunities.

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<sup>52</sup> “да, есть. Именно проблема в знании языка эстонского.” (Interviewee #16, P2, Q4)

<sup>53</sup> “Я знаю, что вообще в Эстонии есть такое, что если ты эстонец, но ты не говоришь на русском, то скорее всего возьмут на работу русского, который говорит по-эстонски.” (Interviewee #3, P2, Q4)

<sup>54</sup> “Приоритет – у тех, кто говорит по-эстонски.” (Interviewee #2, P2, Q4)

<sup>55</sup> (Interviewee #9, P2, Q4)

<sup>56</sup> “А русские всегда ниже, и зарплата отличается, и должность отличается. Но опять же у нас есть многие русские, которые выучили эстонский и продвинулись очень хорошо.” (Interviewee #13, P2, Q4)

<sup>57</sup> “в Эстонии большая часть эстонцев и все государство сосредоточено на изучении именно эстонского языка. И к русским они относятся, ну так не очень хорошо.” (Interviewee #1, P2, Q4)

<sup>58</sup> “ну есть и такие, которые не владеют и русским языком и это очень важно. Это все равно нужно.” (Interviewee #11, P2, Q4)

The Estonian language was also linked to advancement within the field of education. For Part 2, Question 5, “How do you perceive the opportunities of youth from Narva and surrounding Ida-Virumaa to pursue advanced education compared to youth from other areas of Estonia?”, four interviewees underlined the positive correlation between a high proficiency in Estonian and increased educational opportunities. Interviewee #3 stated, *“You learn Estonian, or you don’t learn Estonian. If you do not learn it, then you have less opportunities.”*<sup>59</sup> Interviewee #15 explained, *“Well, it’s harder of course. It is necessary to know the Estonian language very well because we do not have higher-level education offered in the Russian language.”*<sup>60</sup> Interviewee #13 stated that Russian-speaking Estonians have *“significantly fewer opportunities. Because everything is in Estonian and in Ida-Virumaa we mostly have Russians”*<sup>61</sup> - implying that Russian-speakers do not speak Estonian well enough to have the same opportunities as Estonian-speakers. Interviewee #9 suggested that this lower language level for Russian-speaking Estonians is a result of their inability to improve their Estonian:

*I think that most of the young people...Russian-speaking [young people] think that they have less opportunities because of the lack of language. But it’s also a factor because you don’t get enough...let’s say, you don’t get enough practice maybe, in Estonian, so your language doesn’t develop.*<sup>62</sup>

Interviewee # 16 seemed to agree with this assessment that location in Estonia influences the chances to employ the Estonian language, comparing Russian-speakers living in Tallinn to those who live in Narva: *“they have more opportunities to integrate, they have more opportunities to learn the language, they have a greater choice of jobs...”*<sup>63</sup> These comments suggest that discoveries from earlier research about Russian-speaking Estonians access to native Estonian speakers published in the Estonian Human Development Report have not improved much over the past 10 years for people living in Ida-Virumaa:

Today, the problem is not so much the lack of qualified teachers, course books or methodological material, but mostly that both Russian-speaking teachers and students lack communication experience with native speakers, especially in north-eastern Estonia, where the problem is compounded by spatial segregation, in which linguistic integration takes place at an even slower rate. (Heidmets 2012, 123)

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<sup>59</sup> “Ты учишь эстонский или ты его не учишь. Если ты его не учишь, то у тебя меньше возможностей.” (Interviewee #3, P2, Q5)

<sup>60</sup> ну это сложнее, конечно. Нужно знать очень хорошо язык эстонский, потому что у нас же нет образования на русском языке высшего.” (Interviewee #15, P2, Q5)

<sup>61</sup> “значительно меньше возможностей. Потому что все на эстонском, а в Ида-Вирумаа у нас в основном одни русские.” (Interviewee #13, P2, Q5)

<sup>62</sup> (Interviewee #9, P2, Q5)

<sup>63</sup> “у них больше возможностей интегрироваться, у них есть больше возможности учить язык, у них есть больше выбора рабочих мест,” (Interviewee #16, P4, Q6)

Both Part 2, Question 7 and Part 4, Question 6 addressed the topic of integration, questioning the interviewees' perspectives on the role of the Estonian government and the role of the Russian-speaking Estonians. The responses to these questions that referenced language highlighted a generational change in the perception of the Estonian language as well as changes in the Russian-speaking Estonians' and ethnic Estonians' approach to language acquisition. When answering "How often does the Estonian government offer non-integrated Russians the ability to participate in identifying and solving the challenges of integrating into Estonian society?" (P2, Q7), interviewee #11 provided a short anecdote about children's acquisition of Estonian as a positive step for solving the issue of integration:

*...in kindergarten, my daughter is five years old and they are already learning Estonian and English through games.... My second child is in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, completely immersed in the Estonian language, she is learning well, she is integrating.<sup>64</sup>*

Part 4, Questions 6 asked the interviewees to discuss relatively recent and notable changes that have occurred in Narva and the surrounding area over the past seven years as it relates to integration. Interviewee #3 said, *"I have Estonian friends. They see that I want to speak in Estonian with them and they help me. That is, they themselves take the initiative and they help."*<sup>65</sup> She later underlines in the same response that, *"One should know the official state language."*<sup>66</sup> This response underlines her willingness and sense of responsibility tied to learning Estonian, as well as the positive reception by ethnic Estonians. Interviewee #6 said, *"And they [the Estonian government] began to do more. Some measures are being taken so that Russians here learn Estonian and thus integrate more quickly into society."*<sup>67</sup> Interviewee #12 provided an example of such integration efforts, highlighting the generational difference in how language acquisition is perceived:

*There are a lot of integration programs, when children from Narva, active children, go and live and study the language in an Estonian environment.... They already perceive themselves as full citizens of this country because for them there is no problem with the Estonian language. For the stereotypical adult, for example, it is obligatory to learn the language. And if you ask them why - 'to get a B2 certificate, so that I'm not fired at work'. It seems to me that*

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<sup>64</sup> "...у меня дочка пять лет, ни уже учат эстонский английский, в игровой форме.... Второй ребенок у меня учится в 7 классе, в погружении в эстонский язык, она учится хорошо, она интегрируется." (Interviewee #11, P2, Q7)

<sup>65</sup> "У меня есть знакомые эстонцы, они видят, что я хочу говорить с ними по-эстонски, и они помогают мне. То есть у них самих из них исходит инициатива и они помогают." (Interviewee #3, P4, Q6)

<sup>66</sup> "Государственный язык ты должен знать." (Interviewee #3, P4, Q6)

<sup>67</sup> "И больше стали делать, какие-то меры принимаются для того, чтобы русские здесь учили эстонский язык и таким образом интегрировались быстрее в общество." (Interviewee #6, P4, Q6)

*the purpose of the language is simple - to allow us to converse with each other, this is the goal. But people in Narva, they perceive it as some sort of punishment. 'There will be a language proficiency inspection, I will be checked and fired.' This means [for those who think like that] that learning Estonian is necessary only for this reason. But, it seems to me, among young people, there is no longer such an attitude towards the [Estonian] language.*<sup>68</sup>

Finally, Part 4, Question 7, “In your opinion, what are the top three issues that most concern someone living in Narva or Ida-Virumaa?” interviewees again cited language as a central concern: “*studying the Estonian language.*”<sup>69</sup> (Interviewee #1); “*the opportunity for Russians to learn Estonian without being forced to do so.*”<sup>70</sup> (Interviewee #9); “*Well, Language. For example, in order to learn Estonian, I left for six months to live in Tartu.*”<sup>71</sup> (Interviewee #10) and “*Training in Russian – that is one of the main issues.*”<sup>72</sup> (Interviewee #15)

Two-thirds of the interviewees referenced language, often on more than one occasion, as a determining factor in their relationship with the larger Estonian society. Through these references and quotations, the interviewees established that greater proficiency in the Estonian language increases job opportunities for Russian-speakers in work environments outside of the Russian-speaking community, offers greater educational opportunities in Estonia (particularly with regards to higher education), improves the opportunity to receive information directly from figures of authority within Estonia and in general strengthens their relationship and integration with ethnic Estonians. This connection between language proficiency in Estonian and the various positive outcomes in terms of better opportunities, integration and social inclusion, suggests that the more proficiently a Russian-speaker master’s Estonian, the more connected they are to Estonia on a number of different levels – again reducing the social difference between Estonian society and the Russian-speaker. As Maarja Siiner and Triin Vihalemm state in chapter 5.3.1. of the 2012 Human Development Report, “Estonia has been rather successful in convincing the Russian-speaking population that knowing Estonian is an important and almost inevitable means of social mobility” (Heidmets 2012, 122).

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<sup>68</sup> “Очень много интеграционных программ, когда дети из Нарвы, активные дети, ездят и живут и изучают язык в Эстонской среде.... Они уже воспринимают себя полноправными гражданами этой страны. Потому что для них нет проблемы в эстонском языке. Взрослые, например, есть такой стереотип, нам надо учить язык. И если ты спрашиваешь его, зачем – затем, чтобы получить сертификат Б2, чтобы на работе меня не уволили. Мне кажется, язык, его задача просто – чтобы нам с тобой договориться, цель такая. А люди в Нарве, они воспринимают его, как какое-то наказание. Приедет инспекция по языку, меня проверят и уволят. То есть надо только для этого. И вот мне кажется, у молодежи, уже нет такого отношения к языку.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q6)

<sup>69</sup> “и изучения вот эстонского языка” (Interviewee #1, P4, Q7)

<sup>70</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q7)

<sup>71</sup> “Ну язык. Я, например, чтобы выучить эстонский, на полгода уезжал в Тарту жить.” (Interviewee #10, P4, Q7)

<sup>72</sup> “Обучение на русском языке – один из главных вопросов.” (Interviewee #15, P4, Q7)

The amount of emphasis on language is not surprising as it has been and remains a primary focus for the Estonian integration process and many of Russia's language support programs and legal initiatives to protect the linguistic rights of Russian compatriots abroad. From the interview descriptions it can be concluded that the less Estonian an individual knows, the more isolated the individual is from job opportunities, social interaction, social awareness and governmental benefits, thus increasing the social distance between themselves and ethnic Estonians. This is supported by the data collected and analyzed from national level surveys in the 2012 Human Development Report where Maarja Siiner and Triin Vihalemm conclude that

Both objective data and subjective self-positioning show that competence in the national language among non-titulars is connected with higher social status and better pay opportunities compared to those non-titulars who have poorer command of the language (Ibid., 124).

This supports Tomatsu Shibutani and Kian Kwan's theory that when social distance remains great, these individuals will likely assimilate slower into Estonian society and their self-perception of identity will reflect less aspects of Estonian culture (Alba and Nee 2003, 32). However, based on the analysis thus far, it cannot be concluded that the converse is true: the stronger the language connection is to Russian, the stronger the connection remains between the Russian-speaking Estonians and Russia. This remains to be analyzed during section 2.2: "What is the relationship with Russia?".

### **Final conclusions about Estonian Relations**

The interviewees highlighted all aspects of Phillip Hammack's definition of identity; revealing similarities with and differentiating characteristics from ethnic Estonians ("sameness and difference"), ascribing themselves or the entire community in certain areas of Estonian society ("social categorization or group affiliation") and underlining where some areas of this relationship have experienced a generational change (individual continuity and change over time") (McLean and Syed 2015, 1). The three primary means by which Russian-speaking Estonians related to Estonia and ethnic Estonians were through: residency, social and mental behavior, and language. The first two aspects were presented as the strongest connections between the interviewees and their perception of Estonia, suggesting that they are the areas where they consider themselves most similar to ethnic Estonians. The foundation of this relationship is best explained by Turner's collective identity formation theory which states that individuals self-ascribe to a larger society when they have a need or motivation, when they have fewer differences between them and said society than between them and other groups, and when their self-assessment aligns with known stereotypes and assumptions of said society

(Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 118). The presence of these three factors over an extended period of time (26 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union) has led to the salience, or emergence of these traits in the interviewees' everyday lives. These findings support what Kristina Kallas observed as a strong affiliation with Estonia within the Russian-speaking community:

Territorial identification with Estonia is closely associated with everyday social, economic and cultural practices in the Estonian territorial space. Due to long-term residence in Estonia, Estonian-Russians identify with socio-economic structures and practices, the legal framework and everyday cultural practices of Estonia, and simultaneously disassociate themselves from Russia (2016, 14).

Language was one of the primary ways in which Russian-speaking Estonians distinguished themselves from ethnic Estonians. However, the interviews indicated that this aspect is undergoing generational changes and is being constructed less as a barrier and more as a bridge among the younger generations. That is to say, while the older generation viewed the Estonian language as a wall that prevented their ability to be accepted as a member of society, this concept is changing among younger generations and the perception is that the language offers greater access for those who are motivated to access the language.

In all three of the identified similarities between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians, time has played a critical role in drawing out and solidifying these connections. In the book, *Introduction to Border Studies*, Alexander Sebestov and Vladimir Kolosov discuss the case of state borders in the PSS and claim that, "as a rule, the longer a political border exists, the more it is organically integrated into national and ethnic identity and the better a population and economy become adapted to the characteristics of the border areas" (2015, 202). The interviewees described a self-perception of identity that is somewhere in-between national and ethnic, where the influence of time and exposure to ethnic Estonians are significant factors in solidifying the salient characteristics that the interviewees exhibit on a daily basis. Using the understanding of PSS borders presented by Sebestov et al., we can assume that the perceptions the interviewees have described is likely characteristic of Narva and Ida-Virumaa region where the political border influences the larger population and local economy on a daily basis. In a similar vein, given the uniqueness of this border area (lower number of ethnic Estonians, primary means of communication, proximity to Russia) the Estonian influences of the political border are only half of the picture. Understanding the interviewees relationship with Russia will help dissect the second source of influence on the Russian-speaking community.



## **2.2. What is the Relationship with Russia?**

Determining what kind of relationship the interviewees hold with Russia helps to determine how they compare themselves to ethnic Russians in Russia but also to evaluate their self-perceptions as a sub-group to the larger Russian-speaking community. Although the statistics in response to the question “Which phrase best describes you?” were covered in [Table 1](#), section 1.1 (only 13% answered “Russian” (*Русский*)), it is worth noting that in response to this question and throughout the entire interview process, none of the interviewees identified themselves or any other members of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia as “*Россиян*” which is a term that has an ethnic connotation to it.<sup>73</sup> The term was only mentioned twice during the entire interview process: Interviewee #11 used this term, when referring to Russians from abroad coming to Estonia as tourists<sup>74</sup> and interviewee #3 used “*Россиян*” when she was trying to clearly differentiate herself from Russians living in Russia: “*Well, that is I do not relate to being Russian (Россиян), I absolutely do not relate.*”<sup>75</sup> It is also worth noting at this point that the term Russian (*Русский*) in Estonia is used to describe both Russians from Russia and a Russian-speaking Estonian (in the sense that an individual meets all official/legal requirements to be Estonian, but the individual’s native tongue is Russian or the individual is ethnically related to Russians in Russia). When confusion arose about whom I or the interviewees were referencing during the interview, clarifying terms were used such as Russians from Russia, Russian-speaking Estonians, or people residing in Estonia that speak Russian as a native tongue. For the question “When the Russian government speaks on behalf of Russian emigrants, Russians who live outside of Russia, do you feel the Russian government is referring to you?”<sup>76</sup> (P3, Q1a), I used the term emigrant (эмигрант) intentionally because it was the term used by the Russian government when describing Russian-speaking people who live outside of Russia (Russian Federal Law 2013, 1-2)<sup>77</sup>. The objective was to determine how the interviewees perceived descriptions about themselves from the Russian government. This term, was met with resistance by some of the interviewees: “*I never think about myself that way because I’m not an emigrant.*”<sup>78</sup> This resistance in and of itself reinforces the concepts of

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<sup>73</sup> For more information on the differentiation between “*Русский*” and “*Россиян*” see “The Three Colors of Novorossiia, or the Russian Nationalist Mythmaking of the Ukrainian Crisis” (2015) by Marlène Laruelle.

<sup>74</sup> (Interviewee #11, P2, Q4)

<sup>75</sup> “Ну то есть я себя не отношу туда, к россиянам я себя абсолютно не отношу.” (Interviewee #3, P3, Q1b)

<sup>76</sup> “Когда Вы слышите, что правительство России говорит от имени русских иммигрантов, проживающих за границей, чувствуете ли Вы, что оно говорит и от Вашего имени тоже?” (Interview Part 3, Question 1a)

<sup>77</sup> Российская Федерация Федеральный Закон в Редакции Федеральных Законов от 23.07.2013 г. N 203-ФЗ, Статья 1. Понятие соотечественника

<sup>78</sup> “никогда про себя так не думаю, потому что я не эмигрант” (Interviewee #15, P3, Q1a)

residency and permanence which tied many of the interviewees to Estonia as discussed during Section 2.1. Similarly, I deliberately chose not to use the term compatriot (соотечественников) to observe if this was a phrase the interviewees would use of their own accord when describing themselves. This term was only used once as a reference by interviewee #14 in response to Part 3, Question 1c: *“I know there are special programs, programs to support compatriots. And there are different integration courses there. But how to make it affect my life? I do not know.”*<sup>79</sup> The term was clearly not used as a self-referral nor was it used to refer to a specific group or sub-section of Russian-speakers in Estonia.

When describing their identity in their own words (P4, Q1) eight respondents cited “Russian” (Русский/ая) as their primary self-identifying term: *“I consider myself Russian”*<sup>80</sup> (Interviewee #14), *“Well, I consider myself Russian...”*<sup>81</sup> (Interviewee #13) or *“I think that I am Russian”*<sup>82</sup> (Interviewee #2). As mentioned when discussing connections to Estonia, transitioning into the open-ended questions yielded similar depth of detail and justification for [Table 1](#) responses. All but two of the respondents built off of their initial self-description of “Russian” to explain why they considered themselves as such. Although interviewee #15 was the only one to state directly: *“Well I am really Russian. I have my roots in Russia.”*<sup>83</sup> the central theme of “roots”– family and cultural – emerged when the interviewees explained why they considered themselves Russian.

### **Family Roots**

The aspect of family roots was generally presented as a matter-of-fact explanation for considering oneself Russian: *“I am Russian since my parents and relatives are also Russian, that is to say, all of my roots are Russian.”*<sup>84</sup> (Interviewee #1) or *“Through my parents I am Russian and I feel that I am Russian.”*<sup>85</sup> (Interviewee #5). Interviewee #3 stated, *“My parents are Russian. We speak Russian at home. My grandmother and grandfather also speak Russian. I have an aunt who lives in Saint Petersburg, my dad’s sister.”*<sup>86</sup> The strength and importance of family roots also presented itself within Madli Maruste’s research which focused on how

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<sup>79</sup> “я знаю, что есть специальные программы, программы поддержки соотечественников. И разные там интеграционные курсы. Но как, чтобы оно повлияло именно на жизнь, я не знаю.” (Interviewee #14, P3, Q1c)

<sup>80</sup> “я считаю себя русским...” (Interviewee #14, P4, Q1)

<sup>81</sup> “Ну я сама считаю себя русской...” (Interviewee #13, P4, Q1)

<sup>82</sup> (Interviewee #2, P4, Q1)

<sup>83</sup> “ну я действительно русский, я корнями действительно в России.” (Interviewee #15, P4, Q1)

<sup>84</sup> “я русская, так как родители мои тоже русские и родственники все, то есть все корни русский.” (Interviewee #1, P4, Q1)

<sup>85</sup> “По родителям я русский человек и я чувствую, что я русский человек.” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q1)

<sup>86</sup> “Мои родители русские. Мы дома говорим по-русски. Бабушки и дедушки тоже говорят по-русски. У меня тетя живет в Питере, папина сестра.” (Interviewee #3, P4, Q5).

the traumas and unresolved issues from the Soviet Period manifest themselves in younger Russian-speaking Estonians “who have been born or have been living most of their lives in the re-independent Estonia” (2014, 419). Maruste emphasized that “...ethnic and national identity is influenced and shaped by the stories told to them by their parents, grandparents, teachers and last but not least the politicians” (Ibid., 419). Maruste explained that the constant influence of family (or in the case of teachers and politicians, the influence of older ethnic Russians who maintain authority over and constant contact with the younger generations) that the way to perceive issues during the Soviet period persists in present-day Estonian society although the actual situation has changed dramatically over the past 26 years. In the case of Maruste’s research, tensions and traumas manifested themselves within the younger generation even if those individuals never personally experienced the traumas and issues of the Soviet Period. Similarly, the interviewees’ references to family underline the influence that family can have on perpetuating self-identification as Russian and maintaining ethnic ties to Russia although the younger interviewees never lived in Russia or the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, a few interviewees highlighted how family roots complicated this self-identification. In the case of Interviewee #9, the family ethnicity is mixed: *“I’m from bilingual or bicultural family. My mom is Russian my dad is Estonian. So, I’ve always been in between.”*<sup>87</sup> A family connection was also not as strong for those who felt that separation from their Russian family had weakened or erased such a connection with Russia: *“I no longer have a connection with this country [Russia]. My grandparents have already died.”*<sup>88</sup> (Interviewee #6) Phrases such as these imply that aspects such as inter-ethnic marriages or extended separation (no family to visit) from Russia could blur and weaken what some of the interviewees and Maruste established as a strong influence from and connection to Russia through family roots.

This concept of family roots strongly supports Stryker’s identity theory which is based on “identity commitment” where individuals are committed to an identity based on the number of social ties or the affective importance of the social ties that are related to the identity (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 112). Ashmore and Jussim quote Stryker’s explanation of this concept stating, “A man is committed to the role of ‘husband’ in the degree that the number of persons and the importance to him of those persons requires his being in the position of husband and playing that role” (Ibid., 112). Applying this theory to the interviewees, it can be argued

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<sup>87</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q1)

<sup>88</sup> “у меня уже нет связи с этой страной, мои бабушка с дедушкой уже умерли.” (Interviewee #6, P4, Q4)

that the more family ties an interviewee has with family that expect the interviewee to take on the identity of Russian, the more important the concept of “Russian” becomes in self-perception. “Identities that are based on more relationships or intense, emotionally positive relationships will be placed higher in the commitment hierarchy” (Ibid., 112). Conversely, interviewee #6’s response about the grandparents that have passed or interviewee #7’s comment, *“My family is Russian-speaking but none of us have been in Russia, meaning we haven’t lived there. That means I’m from Estonia, yes, but I speak Russian”*<sup>89</sup> suggests that the further removed the Russian-speaking Estonians are from family members who consider themselves Russians from Russia, the less important the concept of being “Russian” becomes.

### **Cultural Roots**

References to cultural roots also justified interviewees’ claims to ties with Russia. Interviewee #6 stated plainly that *“...history, literature and culture”*<sup>90</sup> were among the top ties to Russia. When asked to describe their identity, interviewees used phrases such as: *“Well, first of all, I was brought up in a Russian family, so I’m the bearer of Russian culture.”*<sup>91</sup> (Interviewee #12) or *“I’m Russian by ethnicity”*<sup>92</sup> (Interviewee #5). Unlike family ties, references to cultural roots, which included references to literature and history, appeared more frequently throughout the interview, suggesting a greater strength and importance of this particular tie to Russia. Interviewee #4 explained that for some, the richness of the Russian culture is attractive:

*I really respect Russian culture. Russians have very old national songs which are very developed [culturally]. Russians have had many writers and chic composers. They also have stylish castles, where you can see where the old Tsars were. That is to say, I really like the culture. How they all united together and made something. They, as one, took everything and made it happen.*<sup>93</sup>

To emphasize the sometimes latent but present historical ties within Narva and Estonia, interviewee #9 recounted personal observations from 2006-2007 when the Russian-speaking community demonstrated their affiliation with Russia and the Soviet Union when hundreds of ribbons, handed out by pro-Russian political groups, were worn in support of veterans from

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<sup>89</sup> “Моя семья русскоязычная, но никто из нас в России не был, ну то есть не не был, а не жил там. То есть я из Эстонии, да, но с русским языком.” (Interviewee #7, P4, Q3)

<sup>90</sup> “...история, литература, культура.” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q5)

<sup>91</sup> “ну прежде всего, если я воспитана в русской семье, то соответственно я носитель русской культуры.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q1)

<sup>92</sup> “Русский я этнически” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q1)

<sup>93</sup> “я уважаю очень русскую культуру. У них очень старые национальные песни, которые у них очень развиты. У них очень были писатели, у них композиторы шикарные. Потом у них очень шикарные замки, которые можно посмотреть, где цари вот. Ну то есть мне очень нравится культура. Как они все вместе сплотились и что-то делали. Они как единое целое, взяли все и сделали.” (Interviewee #4, P4, Q5)

World War II. Interviewee #9 explained that the ribbons carried an underlying message: “*So in a way it is said that by wearing this ribbon, whether on yourself on your car, you respect the victims on the Second World War, so the Nazis versus the Soviets*”<sup>94</sup>.<sup>95</sup> In Olga Davydova’s article, she explains that “The strength of the Great Patriotic War [WWII] discourse lies in its proximity to almost all families in Russia, whose members fought, suffered or killed during the war” (2008, 399). Although political borders now separate the Russian speaking community in Estonia from Russians in Russia, interviewee #9’s description shows that the Russian WWII narrative continues to unite members of the Russian-speaking community in Estonia with Russians in Russia as a result of a shared history with and collective memory of the Soviet Union.

For many of the interviewees, the access to their cultural roots was through language. Where the Estonian language served as a distinguishing factor between the Russian-speaking community and Estonians, the interviewees cited the Russian language as not only a unifying aspect with Russian-speakers outside of Estonia, but also as the means through which they could access deeper aspects of their Russian cultural roots expressed in humor, literature and media. Interviewee #15 said, “*I love Russia, I love Russian people. I understand them perfectly; both those who live here and those who are there [in Russia]*.”<sup>96</sup> Interviewee #14 elaborated on this common understanding:

*When you speak with a Russian, without fail you have some kindred feelings. I mean, even if you meet an Estonian abroad, you are unlikely to speak with him. But if you meet a Russian abroad, that is, not in Estonia, somewhere in another country, then you will be greeted and you will have a feeling of some kind of community. That is, you will feel like you are a part of a singular group.*<sup>97</sup>

Some interviewees focused on other aspects of cultural connectedness that transpire through the use of the Russian language. Interviewee #9 stated,

*I understand the humor, I understand the language, I understand the...the little details which are in the culture. So, I’m not missing out on jokes for example, So that. So, I know to, how to communicate with Russians so, so to feel [like] one of them I guess.*<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> This narrative “Nazis versus the Soviets” is the application of the Russian generated narrative concerning the liberation of Estonia from Nazi, Germany which is in opposition to the Estonian generated narrative of unlawful occupation by the Nazis and the Soviets.

<sup>95</sup> (Interviewee #9, P3, Q1d)

<sup>96</sup> “Я люблю русских людей, я прекрасно их понимаю...” (Interviewee #15, P4, Q5)

<sup>97</sup> “Когда ты говоришь с русским, у тебя в любом случае возникают какие-то родственные чувства. То есть даже когда ты встречаешься за границей с эстонцем, ты вряд ли с ним заговоришь. А если ты встречаешься за границей с русским, то есть не в Эстонии, там где-нибудь в другой стране, то ты можешь поздороваться и у тебя будет чувство какое-то общности. То есть вы будете чувствовать себя какой-то единой группой.” (Interviewee #14, P4, Q5)

<sup>98</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q5)

Interviewee #12 also discussed humor by stating, “...*Well the base [of cultural connection] is literature and films. Because even jokes are understandable to us, because those phrases that they take from films, they are clear and funny to me. In other words, humor.*”<sup>99</sup> Humor is a particularly interesting aspect within Russian culture as it is multi-layered and historically based. Professor of Russian history and author of the book *Tiny Revolutions in Russia*, Bruce Adams explains that:

Anecdotes and jokes were a hidden form of discursive communication in the Soviet era, lampooning official practices and acting as a confidential form of self-affirmation [...] Above all they provide invaluable insights into everyday life and the attitudes and concerns of ordinary people (2015, i).

Another prominent researcher of Russian humor and author of the book *Taking Penguins to the Movies: Ethnic humor in Russia*, Emil Draitser, emphasizes that “a proper reading of an ethnic joke requires a concrete historical background of the time of their circulation” (1998, 18). In addition to the historical and quotidian insight jokes provide, the humor is also “a means of understanding the attitudes and customs, beliefs and idiosyncrasies, and inter- and intra-group relationships of this [Russian] multinational society” (Ibid., 9). While the interviewees did not reveal what kind of humor (dark humor, ethnic humor, anti-Soviet humor, etc.) they understood or shared with Russians, what is important is that much of this humor was only really transferable through the Russian language: “translations cannot capture all the shades of meaning in some of the jokes, and there are absolutely wonderful but untranslatable puns and other plays on words in many others” (Adams 2015, 2). In summary, through the Russian language, the interviewees are able to participate in and understand Russian culture which helps cultivate their Russian cultural roots despite their physical separation from Russia. Moreover, this concept of identifying with a larger group through shared characteristics again reflects Turner’s collective identity formation concept. The interviewees have expressed that there are shared traits (history, language, humor,) that unites them with the larger Russian society.

In addition to the necessity of Russian as the medium through which one expresses and understands cultural humor, interviewees underlined that cultural aspects related to literature and media were also more accessible through the Russian language. Interview #12 stated,

*I mainly read in Russian and very rarely in Estonian. Literally, my list would be very short in Estonian. And there are differences. The Russian literary market, the literature printed in Russian, is huge. The entire Estonian book*

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<sup>99</sup> “...вот эта вот база, литература, фильмы. Потому что даже вот шутки нам понятны, потому что те фразы, которые они берут из фильмов, они мне понятны и мне это смешно. То есть юмор.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q5)

*market is much narrower. For a small country, some things cannot be printed because it is economically unprofitable.*<sup>100</sup>

Without discrediting or devaluing Estonian literature, the interviewee's comment underlines an undeniable fact: the proliferation and notoriety of Russian literature and Russian writers and the generated interest and availability of Russian language material is significantly larger than that of Estonia. Therefore, we can conclude that Russian literature and the culture it describes has a greater opportunity to influence the Russian-speaking community. Similarly, when discussing present day culture and media, interviewee #9 noted the fact that a majority of media sources available within Narva and Ida-Virumaa are primarily in the Russian language. "...*here the Russian speakers are more, Russia-centered, or they, they get a lot of information from Russian media channels.*"<sup>101</sup> Interviewee #5 also claimed that "...*usually here local Russians we see only Russian government channels.*"<sup>102</sup> and interviewee #13 said, "*I mostly watch Russian news.*"<sup>103</sup> In addition to emphasizing that a majority of the media is presented in the Russian-language, interviewees #5 and #9 commented that the media is heavily influenced from Russia, meaning the material presented could be considered one-sided. This claim is substantiated in Olga Davydova's article "Bronze Soldier goes Transnational" where she explains how Russian media has been transformed to serve as a tool for eliciting emotions and reactions from the audience to raise political mobilization:

It is used largely and purposely as an explicit vehicle for triggering precise, emotional responses from its audiences. Politics is commonly dramatized on television, presented mostly in the form of infotainment: news as a collage of non-related fragments, highly emotional and often moralizing, humorous or sarcastic comments. Infotainment aims to produce a particularly emotional reaction in terms of appropriation or rejection, agreement or outcry, concerning a particular event or set of events (2008, 394-395).

Regardless of the objectivity of the media presented, its availability in the Russian language, use of humor and connection to events ongoing in Russia help to keep the community in Estonia connected to Russia. Olga Davydova cites Schmidt et al., 2006 and Saunders, 2004 when she adds that the material and the language used in Russian-centric internet-based media are also "seen as something that unites the Russian-speaking diaspora around the world" (Davydova

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<sup>100</sup>"Я читаю в основном на русском, и очень редко на эстонском. Буквально у меня список будет очень короткий на эстонском. И есть различия. Русский литературный рынок, то, что печатается на русском, он огромен. Все-таки эстонский книжный рынок он намного уже. Маленькая страна, что-то ты не будешь печатать, это экономический невыгодно." (Interviewee #12, P4, Q5)

<sup>101</sup> (Interviewee #9, P2, Q4)

<sup>102</sup> (Interviewee #5, Lines 375-376)

<sup>103</sup> "я смотрю в основном русские новости." (Interviewee #13, P3, Q1a)

2008, 394). Although not explicitly stated by Davydova, one can conclude that a dedicated and unilateral emphasis on presenting a positive Russian perspective can have an influence on self-perception and connectedness with Russia. Indeed, the comments from the interviewees suggest that a shared history, an attractive and rich literature, and a common language through which to communicate, understand, and perceive the world explain why interviewees related strongly to their Russian cultural roots.

Discussions about the Russian language also diverted slightly from discussions of culture, focusing instead on the protection of the Russian language education within Estonia. Interviewee #12 cited a reoccurring topic during Narvan political campaigns of introducing a second high school in Narva because the additional school would provide “*more opportunities to receive education in Russian.*”<sup>104</sup> Interviewee #12 implied that having a strong Russian education contributed to personally having more opportunities for life improvement in comparison to other Estonians: “*I can get an education here or there [Saint Petersburg]. And [I have] a huge base in Russian literature. I think I have more [opportunities to improve my life]. Definitely more.*”<sup>105</sup> Interviewee #11 argued that the Estonian government had a responsibility of maintaining a high level of Russian language proficiency within the public service domain, claiming that a substantial number of people (particularly the older generation of Russian-speaking Estonians) still communicate primarily in Russian:

*Well, there are those who do not speak Russian and this is very important. It is still necessary... Well, for example, if I'm calling there to book tickets...and I need it quickly, I'm a little nervous. And I naturally cannot say it in Estonian...I press the number 2 [help option for Russian speakers] but then the girl cannot speak Russian. And I need this information.*<sup>106</sup>

Interviewee #11 continued that Russian is important not only for the residents in Estonia, but also for the Russian-speakers who visit Estonia: “*This language should be [spoken] because there are a lot of tourists and they want to come here. And if you greet them well and you speak the language of these tourists, it's nice for them, they will come back here.*”<sup>107</sup> According to the *Statistical Yearbook of Estonia 2015 (Eesti statistika aastaraamat 2015)*, “Two of Estonia’s

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<sup>104</sup> “...будет больше возможности получать образование на русском языке.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q7)

<sup>105</sup> “Я могу получать образование и здесь, и там. И огромная база русскоязычной литературы.” (Interviewee #12, P2, Q6)

<sup>106</sup> “ну есть и такие, которые не владеют и русским языком и это очень важно. Это все равно нужно... Это ну например если звоню там, бронирую билеты...и надо это быстро, я немножко нервничаю. И я естественно это на эстонском не могу сказать. Я вот звоню и нажимаю цифру два, а там девочка не может сказать по-русски. А мне нужна эта информация.” (Interviewee #11, P2, Q4)

<sup>107</sup> “Этот язык должен быть, потому что туристов очень много, и они хотят приехать сюда. И если их хорошо встречать и ты говоришь на языке этих туристов, это же им приятно, они еще вернутся сюда.” (Interviewee #11, P2, Q4)



most important partner countries in tourism are Finland and Russia – 60% of all accommodated foreign tourists arrived from these countries” (2015, 374). Considering this, interviewee #11’s comment adds an economic value for Estonia to invest in Russian proficiency, at least as it pertains to Ida-Virumaa. Interviewees expressed a desire for Estonia to place greater emphasis on the importance of conversing in Russian because it is part of their cultural roots. Interviewees also emphasized however, that maintaining a high proficiency in Russian offered opportunities for future career advancement, is still a necessity for Russian-speakers who are less proficient in Estonian and facilitates better relations with Russian tourists who stimulate the local economy.

It is interesting to point out that discussions about the Russian language proficiency level of the interviewees was also commented on by the native Russian-speaker from Moscow who transcribed the majority of the audio interview material. The difference in Russian proficiency of the younger interviewees (specifically their vocabulary and sentence structures) was noticeably different from the older Russians and according to the native Russian speaker, someone from Russia would associate their proficiency level with someone with a low-level education. While there are many things that could have affected the younger interviewees’ word choice and tone (for example the informal interview environment of a café, my approach during the interviewee as a fellow student or nervousness from conducting an impromptu interview) it is still interesting that there is both a generational difference and regional difference in language usage observed when presented to a native Russian-speaker from Russia. This phenomenon gives credit not only to the interviewees who feel that Russian is deteriorating within Estonia when compared to Russians from Russia, but also to Russia’s 2016-2020 language plan which was developed to reinforce the standardization of the Russian language across the PSS.<sup>108</sup> Already in 2012, the Human Development Report concluded that “there has been a significant shift towards the self-reported preference of the usage of Estonian at the expense of Russian. One reason for the change may be the poor knowledge of Russian among Estonian youth but also the higher status of the Estonian language in the public sphere” (2012, 122). Given the critical role the Russian language is playing according to the interviewees thus far, future research on how language alterations/changes between Russian spoken in Estonia and Russian spoken in Russia might be a complimentary study, particularly

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<sup>108</sup> Decree of 20 May 2015 No. 481 on the federal target program "Russian language" for 2016-2020. Original title: Постановление от 20 мая 2015 г. № 481 о федеральной целевой программе "Русский язык" на 2016 - 2020 годы.

as it pertains to influencing the separation or isolation of Russian-speaking Estonians from Russians in Russia.

### **Institutional Connections**

While the connection to Russia through family and culture was strong, similar ties were not as strong through official government institutions. Part 3, Questions 1 and 2 sought to determine the interviewees awareness of the Russian government's actions as well as to determine their perception of that government as it related to their status as a Russian-speaker living outside of Russia. During this section, the connection appeared weak based on two factors: evaluating the responses by percentages (See [Table 3](#)) and the lack of knowledge of/interest in Russian governmental actions/policies (observed through self-acknowledgement and lack of comments).

<b>Table 3: Responses to Part 3, Question 1: Do you feel the Russian Government...</b>				
Question	1a	1b	1c	1d
	refers to you when addressing Russians abroad?	represents or addresses your concerns?	offers solutions that improve your day-to-day life	offers you the ability to help resolve challenges as a Russian abroad?
<b>Never</b>	50%	63%	38%	50%
<b>Once in a while</b>	25%	19%	38%	38%
<b>Sometimes</b>	6%	6%	19%	6%
<b>A majority of the time</b>	19%	6%	6%	6%
<b>Always</b>	0%	6%	0%	0%

Beginning with the statistical responses, 75% or more of the interviewees felt that when the Russian government addressed policies aimed to support Russian-speakers living outside of Russia that: 1) this did not refer to them, 2) that the policies did not address concerns that mattered to them and 3) that they had not been given the opportunity to be a part of determining what type of support was needed (See [Table 3](#)). For the question “Do you feel the Russian government offers solutions that improve your day-to-day life?”, the percentage that answered “once in a while” or “sometimes” increased slightly (57%), however the comments for this question still denoted a sense of disassociation from said solutions: *“I heard they offer something, but I would not use such services. I don’t need them.”*<sup>109</sup> (Interviewee #3) or

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<sup>109</sup> “Я слышала, что они что-то предлагают, но я бы не стала пользоваться такими услугами. Мне не надо.” (Interviewee #3, P3, Q1c)

*“Probably, rarely, but I don’t even know.”*<sup>110</sup> (Interviewee #7). These comments are similar to comments made by Interviewee #14 discussed earlier when acknowledging the existence of a compatriot policy, but suggesting that it was not personally applicable: *“But how to make it affect my life? I do not know.”*<sup>111</sup> A majority of the interviewees claimed that perhaps they were unable to provide more information because they were simply uninformed of such things. While the argument is not that every member of the Russian-speaking community should be politically active or aware of governmental policies (Estonian or Russian), the lack of interest/knowledge supports the idea that there is a disassociation between the Russian government and the Russian-speaking Estonians. This disassociation was verbalized in phrases such as: *“My government is not there, it is here.”*<sup>112</sup> (Interviewee #3), or *“I’m not the target of their groups”*<sup>113</sup> (Interviewee #9). Interviewee #16 even suggested that Russia is not in a position to offer solutions for Russian-speaking Estonians: *“Unfortunately, they [Russian government] cannot even provide a normal life for their own citizens.”*<sup>114</sup>

Interviewee #11, an Estonian passport holder, suggested that the policies might be more relevant for two subgroups within Estonia: *“You know, this can apply to those who have a red or grey passport. They can be connected with them [Russian government]”*<sup>115</sup>. Interviewee #12’s comments seemed to support this hypothesis by explaining that current policies on travel between Estonia and Russia really benefit those who do not have citizenship in Estonia:

*Although there are some citizens, foreigners, without citizenship, they have the opportunity to visit Russia without a visa. In my case – I pay for the visa, more than any other visa...now for me the most expensive visa is a visa to Russia, although, it would seem, I was born there.*<sup>116</sup>

However, isolating the responses of the grey and red passport holders among the interviewees did not yield similar conclusions. Interviewee #6, the only grey passport holder among the interviewees, answered with either “never” (Q1a, Q1b and Q1d) or “once in a while” (Q1c) with no supporting comments. Interviewee #15 held only a Russian (red) passport and also answered either “never” or “once in a while” for all questions except for Question 1d, with a

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<sup>110</sup> “наверное, редко, но я даже не знаю.” (Interviewee #7, P3, Q1c)

<sup>111</sup> “Но как, чтобы оно повлияло именно на жизнь, я не знаю.” (Interviewee #14, P3, Q1c)

<sup>112</sup> “Не там мое правительство, оно здесь.” (Interviewee #3, P3, Q1b)

<sup>113</sup> (Interviewee #9, P3, Q1d)

<sup>114</sup> “Они не могут, к сожалению, даже своих граждан обеспечить нормальной жизнью.” (Interviewee #16, P3, Q1c)

<sup>115</sup> “вы знаете, это может относиться к тем, у кого красный или серый паспорт. С ними может связано.” (Interviewee #11, P3, Q1d)

<sup>116</sup> “Хотя есть часть граждан, иностранцы, без гражданства, у них есть возможность посещать Россию без визы. В моем случае – я плачу за визу дороже, чем за какую-либо другую визу...Сейчас для меня самая дорогая виза – виза в Россию, хотя я, казалось бы, родилась там.” (Interviewee #12, P3, Q1d)

response of “sometimes”. Interviewees #13 and #14 claimed they held both an Estonian and Russian passport and their responses were only slightly more positive for Question 1a (interviewee #13 chose “a majority of the time”) and for Question 1c (interviewee #14 chose “sometimes”). In other words, among the grey and red passport holders, there was no clear indication that they perceived the questions about Russian policies drastically differently than those with an Estonian passport. Moreover, among the red passport holders, phrases of disassociation were still used: *“because I’m not an emigrant”*<sup>117</sup> and *“Russia has forgotten us”*<sup>118</sup> (Interviewee #15), *“Russia doesn’t care”*<sup>119</sup> (Interviewee #13) *“Never, I am not an emigrant, I am a native”*<sup>120</sup> (Interviewee #11). While the data collected during these interviews did not reveal a clear differentiation between the opinions of Estonian passport, Russian passport and grey passport holders’ perceptions of the Russian government, the responses to these four questions did provide a strong indication that the messages and policies directed towards the Russian-speaking population living outside of Russia are not received as relevant or pertinent for the interviewees or Russian-speaking Estonians in general.

Part 3, Question 2 presented a quotation from Former Russian President Medvedev concerning the 2008 Russo-Georgian War, in which he addressed Russia’s efforts to defend the Russian population living outside of Russia. Interviewees were then asked to comment on how much they agree with the justification provided about Russia’s actions. The answers did not reveal any trends among the interviewees (See [Table 4](#)). For a few of the interviewees, the situation and their interpretation of events was very clear: *“each country must support and protect its citizens”*<sup>121</sup> (Interviewee #14) or *“Russia has no, should have no political interest in other country [sic]”*<sup>122</sup> (Interviewee #9). Many of the comments however, expressed hesitation based on lack of knowledge of the event: *“It is difficult for me to answer the question, as I do not have information.”*<sup>123</sup> (Interviewee #12) or *“I do not know this situation, I cannot say anything”*<sup>124</sup> (Interviewee #7). This lack of knowledge and hesitation could be due to a number of reasons, to include: the amount of time passed since the event, the age of the interviewees at the time of the event, or the amount of coverage in Narva of the event. While

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<sup>117</sup> “потому что я не эмигрант” (Interviewee #15, P3, Q1a)

<sup>118</sup> “Россия про нас забыла” (Interviewee #15, P3, Q1b)

<sup>119</sup> “России все равно” (Interviewee #13, P3 Q1c)

<sup>120</sup> “никогда, я же не эмигрант, я коренной житель” (Interviewee #11, P3, Q1a)

<sup>121</sup> “каждая страна должна поддерживать и защищать своих граждан” (Interviewee #14, P3, Q2)

<sup>122</sup> (Interviewee #9, P3, Q2)

<sup>123</sup> “для меня сложно ответить на этот вопрос, потому что я не владею информацией.” (Interviewee #12, P3, Q2)

<sup>124</sup> “я не знаю эту ситуацию, не могу ничего сказать.” (Interviewee #7, P3, Q2)

the responses did not reveal any trend regarding association with the Russian government, it equally did not show a connection between the interviewees and the larger Russian-speaking population living outside of Russia.

<b>Table 4: Responses to Russian involvement in Russo-Georgian War</b>	
<b>Completely agree</b>	19%
<b>Agree with most of the quote</b>	6%
<b>I somewhat agree</b>	13%
<b>I disagree with most of the quote</b>	25%
<b>I completely disagree</b>	25%
<b>No response provided</b>	13%

### **Final Conclusions about Russian Connections**

The interviewees' strongest examples of connection to Russia were through their perceived roots - family and cultural. The concept of family roots supports Stryker's identity theory which attributes this connection to the interviewees' commitment to an identity of "Russian" assigned to them by the social ties they hold with family members that also consider themselves Russian, particularly those that are still located in Russia (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 112). While family ties to Russia presented themselves as an influential and enduring force that decreased the social distance between the interviewees and Russians, research and the interviewees' comments also suggest that this connection is negatively affected by time. Stated plainly, the longer Russian-speaking Estonians remain in Estonia, the weaker their family connections are to those who are still in Russia and hold the idea of self-perception of "Russian" as critical. With regards to culture, in addition to a shared history and collective memory, the Russian language is identified as the key attribute through which culture is transferred between Russian-speaking Estonians and Russians. This occurs through literature, media (TV and internet), humor and the interaction with others who share their native language.

In contrast to the strong unofficial ties the interviewees held with Russia, the relationship with official Russian institutions, particularly those aimed at addressing Estonia's Russian-speaking community, was much weaker than their connection to Estonian state institutions. External connection of residency and citizenship were significantly lower with only one Russian-only passport holder, and all interviewees holding Estonian citizenship. While during Section 2.1, the interviewees considered the Estonian government the provider of citizenship, the government under which they fell legally and the institution that affected

their economic situation, all references made about the Russian government were met with unfamiliarity or a feeling that the Russian government had no interest in the interviewees' situation or had no influence over it. We can conclude that despite dissatisfaction with certain Estonian government actions, their connection was much stronger than that established with the Russian government.

Finally, exploring the relationship between the interviewees and the Russian government also somewhat revealed how Russian-speaking Estonians view other Russian-speakers living outside of Russia. The interviewees inability or unwillingness to identify with Russian-speaking Georgians speaks to the relationship held with the larger Russian-speaking community within the PSS. There is a significant lack of cognitive alignment between Russian-Speaking Estonians and the larger Russian-speaking community living outside the borders of Russia. The implications of this will be discussed in more detail during the conclusion. For now, it is sufficient to recognize that Turner's theory on socially influenced self-categorization would suggest that Russian-speaking Estonians consider themselves different from other Russian-speakers located throughout the PSS. We will now explore how the Russian-speaking Estonians have come to establish themselves as neither Estonian or Russian, rather as a unique community.

### **2.3. Who is a Russian-speaking Estonian?**

Thus far, the analysis has clearly shown that neither the single word descriptors of "Russian" or "Estonian" nor their associated stereotypes, governments, cultures or social habits fully capture the way the Russian-speaking interviewees categorize themselves or the larger Russian-speaking community of Narva and Ida-Virumaa. Perhaps interviewee #5 stated it best: *"I'm not 100 percent one, nor 100 percent the other."*<sup>125</sup> Moreover, their explanations showed that comparisons between the two countries were not binary: if Russian-speaking Estonians considered themselves quieter than Russians, that did not make them either "quiet Russians" or "loud Estonians". Similarly, if they said that they did not feel Estonian in certain situations, that did not necessarily mean that they therefore felt Russian. Instead, the interviewees have described themselves as simultaneously exhibiting both Russian and Estonian traits, yielding something that is neither Russian nor Estonian. This attraction to and distancing from both countries is described by the interviewees as complex and conflicting as they and the larger Russian-speaking community struggle to answer the questions "Who am I" and "Who are we"

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<sup>125</sup> "Я сто процентов не один, сто процентов не другой." (Interviewee #5, P4, Q1)

vis-à-vis Russia and Estonia. Citing Samnani et al. (2012) in their article “Acculturation Preferences, Ethnic and Religious Identification and the Socio-Economic Adaptation of Russian-Speaking Immigrants in Belgium” authors Dmitry Grigoryev and John Berry suggest that other minorities faced with similar questions of integration into a new society versus maintaining the customs and cultures of their former society reacted in one of four different ways. These four reactions make up Samnani et al.’s dissonance theory which states that minorities will react:

(1) by trying to completely accept the different values and norms through adopting the assimilation preference; (2) by taking some of the new values and norms, while retaining some of their original own values and norms through the integration strategy; (3) by trying to distance themselves from the new values and norms, rejecting them, and at the same time adhering strictly to their original culture by the separation strategy; (4) by rejecting the values and norms of the new culture, and at the same time, giving up their own, using the marginalization strategy (Samnani et al., 2012 as cited in Grigoryev and Berry 2017, 541-542).

As mentioned at the beginning when discussing the results of Part 1, Question 6, 87% of the interviewees described themselves with an answer that had aspects of both Estonian and Russian descriptors. When coupled with supporting analysis from Sections 2.1 and 2.2 which stated that the interviewees hold multiple connections with Estonia and Russia, we can conclude that option two of the dissonance theory most accurately describes the interviewees’ responses: “taking some of the new values and norms, while retaining some of their original own values and norms through the integration strategy” (Grigoryev and Berry 2017, 541-542). Nevertheless, despite repeated emphasis on the ties to both countries, the interviewees also revealed significant areas of isolation from both countries. Key factors in this isolation were physical separation from ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians as well as ethnic discrimination and political exclusion.

### **Physical and Social Separation from Estonians**

When driving from Tallinn to Narva, the transition to a more Russian-oriented environment becomes particularly apparent at the border between the regions of Lääne-Virumaa and Ida-Virumaa: billboard advertisements, street names and a majority of the radio stations switch from Estonian to Russian. Interviewee #9 even stated that “*There’s still a notion that... Estonia ends at the border of Ida-Virumaa. Whether we want it or not, it [this perception] still exists.*”<sup>126</sup> Narva was selected as the starting point for this research because

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<sup>126</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q7)

statistics showed that the city held the greatest percentage of those considered Russian-speaking Estonians and conversely, the least number of ethnic Estonians. The interviewees' comments emphasized the extremity of this ethnic separation in Narva as it pertained to daily interactions. Interviewee #7 stated, *"Particularly here, I do not see Estonians.... Well there are some, but it's very rare to come across them here in Narva because here is considered a purely Russian-speaking city. Of course, there are some here, but I haven't seen many."*<sup>127</sup> Interviewee #9 also agreed that the percentage of ethnic Estonians to Russian-speaking Estonians was noticeable: *"There's a bigger contrast in, in Narva because the population of Russians is so high."*<sup>128</sup> Interviewee #8 had difficulty describing satisfaction with how Estonians and Russians interact because, *"I have seen very little communication between Estonians and Russians [Russian-speaking Estonians]. Maybe only here at the college."*<sup>129</sup> While interviewee #3 simply stated, *"In general, it seems to me that they do not interact at all. I think there are too many Russians [Russian-speaking Estonians] here."*<sup>130</sup> Based on previous research statistics and the interviewees' comments, it is possible to conclude that a majority of the people living in Narva are isolated from ethnic Estonians on a daily basis.

### **Ethnic Discrimination from Estonians**

Despite the interviewees' emphasis that interaction with ethnic Estonians is minimal in Narva, strong sentiments of persecution and discrimination from ethnic Estonians towards Russian-speaking Estonians were expressed, particularly with regards to job opportunities and income levels. Here again, it is worth noting that the interviewees transitioned from describing situations in which they were personally discriminated against and instead spoke as a representative of the collective Russian-speakers living in Estonia. Interviewee #15 stated, *"Well, first of all, Estonians earn more than the Russians. Absolutely! For us the case is such that Estonians earn automatically probably around 25 percent more than Russians."*<sup>131</sup> Interviewee #13 agreed with this differentiation of job opportunities. *"Well, yes, there is a difference, that's for sure. Because only Estonians have the good jobs and work in good positions. But the Russians are always lower, the salary is different and the position is*

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<sup>127</sup> "Я тут эстонцев-то особо не видела." (Interviewee #7, P2, Q2)

<sup>128</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q7)

<sup>129</sup> "я мало где наблюдала, где общаются эстонцы с русскими. Если только тут у нас, в колледже." (Interviewee #8, P2, Q2)

<sup>130</sup> "Вообще мне кажется, они вообще не взаимодействуют. Мне кажется, здесь слишком много русских." (Interviewee #3, P2, Q2)

<sup>131</sup> "ну самое первое – эстонцы зарабатывают больше, чем русские. Стопроцентно! У нас автоматически процентов, наверное, на 25 эстонцы зарабатывают больше, чем русские." (Interviewee #15, P2, Q4)



*different.*”<sup>132</sup> Interviewee #2 was more critical, stating that a Russian-speaking Estonian “*will not be hired, as it were, because he is Russian*”.<sup>133</sup> Interviewee #7, although unwilling to comment specifically on ethnic discrimination in the job market, nonetheless concluded, “*Still, Estonians have more opportunities [in life]*.”<sup>134</sup>

In addition to the negative associations of discrimination and the associated lower income for Russian-speaking Estonians, unfair employment has other implications on the severity of the Russian-speaking population’s isolation. Grigoryev and Berry reference Aycan and Berry’s (1996) research on immigrants from Turkey in Canada to explain the critical role that employment plays in positively shaping a community, particularly one faced with challenges of relating with another culture:

The authors note that employment provides a certain purpose in life, determines status and identity, and allows immigrants to establish relationships with other people in the larger society. This last function is especially crucial for immigrants, since the more immigrants interact with groups in society in general, the faster they learn the skills of everyday life in the host country. Unemployed immigrants will suffer not only a decrease in psychological well-being but also a delay in their sociocultural adaptation (Aycan & Berry, 1996). Overall, the findings of this study suggest that employment for immigrants performs many other important functions in addition to generating income (Grigoryev 2017, 540).

While the title of immigrant does not accurately describe the Russian-speaking community’s place within Estonia, Aycan and Berry’s studies still suggest that the less Russian-speaking Estonians are able to participate in the Estonian job-market, the more likely it is that ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians will remain culturally isolated. Moreover, it can be assumed that when employment does occur and ethnic Estonians are paid more than Russian-Speaking Estonians, the relationship of superior (ethnic Estonian) to inferior (Russian-speaking Estonian) could psychologically (and negatively) influence how the cultural relations between the two groups develop. This negative sentiment was expressed by a few of the interviewees. Interviewee #13 explained that the animosity between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians is still very present:

*Many Estonians do not like Russians, and Russians also do not like Estonians. That’s how it is for us, this is very common. Especially in the Estonian cities. If native Estonians see Russians, then a bad situation can develop. That’s how it*

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<sup>132</sup> “ну да, есть разница, это точно. Потому что у нас все хорошие работы, на хороших должностях работают только эстонцы. А русские всегда ниже, и зарплата отличается, и должность отличается.” (Interviewee #13, P2, Q4)

<sup>133</sup> “Его как бы не будут брать на работу, потому что он русский.” (Interviewee #2, P2, Q4)

<sup>134</sup> “Все-таки у эстонцев больше возможностей.” (Interviewee #7, P2, Q6)

*was for us. It was Estonians against the Russians, that's literally about five years ago.*"<sup>135</sup>

Similarly, interviewee #7 highlighted ethnic hostility when comparing ethnic sentiments in Kohtla-Järve, the interviewee's hometown (in Ida-Virumaa) with sentiments in Narva:

*"...in Kohtla-Järve, somehow there is more respect for [ethnic] Estonians than here in Narva. In Narva, everyone somehow believes that: 'No, this is a Russian city. Estonians have all the others.' I do not agree with this. I do not like it when they say it. By this I mean, I am calm towards the fact that there are Estonians and Russians. Still, we live in their country, we need to somehow respect each other.*"<sup>136</sup>

Interviewee #7 not only underlined the ethnic tensions that an unequal job market perpetuates, but the statement, *"Still, we live in their country..."* also demonstrates the associated feelings of isolation and separation which result from such inequality and discrimination. It is not interviewee #7's country, it is the country of ethnic Estonians from which interviewee #7 is separated. In the panel discussion hosted by *Deep Baltic* held on April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017 with Kristina Kallas and Francisco Martinez titled "Discussing Identity and Minorities in an Estonian Border City", Madli Maruste referenced her research which also addressed topics of discrimination, revealing that isolation between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians extends well beyond the job market:

And I have interviewed a lot of young people, asking about this – young people from Narva, Tartu, Tallinn. Young people with this mixed heritage, maybe Russian speaking – they told me stories of how they had not been included in the [Estonian Song] festival. Let's say they wanted to participate because they told me "this is an Estonian party and I really wanted to participate. And I went to this choir training and I had learnt all the songs, etc., and then my teacher told me 'no, no, you can't attend, because this is an Estonian party'" (2017, 15).

Finally, interviewee #15 suggested that ethnic discrimination has also hindered those with a Russian background from serving within the higher levels of Estonian government, resulting in unfair representation for Russian-speakers in Estonia:

*Even if you learn a language, there is still such a thing called a "glass ceiling", you will not jump above it. All the same, at the highest level, all the bosses, are still always Estonians. Therefore, there are things where Russians are not*

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<sup>135</sup> "Многие эстонцы не любят русских, а русские также не любят эстонцев. Такое есть у нас, такое встречается очень часто. Особенно вот в эстонских городах. Если эстонцы коренные видят русских, то не очень хорошая ситуация может сложиться. У нас такое было. Было, что эстонцы шли против русских, вот буквально лет пять назад это было." (Interviewee #13, P4, Q3)

<sup>136</sup> "... в Кохляярви как-то больше все-таки уважения к эстонцам, нежели здесь в Нарве. В Нарве все как-то считают, что нет, это русский город. Эстонцы такие все сякие, у меня такого нет. Мне это наоборот не нравится, когда там говорят. То есть я спокойно к этому отношусь, что есть и эстонцы и русские. Все-таки мы живем в их стране, нужно друг друга как-то уважать." (Interviewee #7, P4, Q6)

*allowed to do. In the Riigikogu [the unicameral parliament of Estonia], in my opinion, there are two or three Russians. All in all, 101 people, but three Russians.*<sup>137</sup>

### **Economic differences from Estonians**

Accumulated reports on Estonia's progress since independence highlight that the country as a whole has transitioned through different economic conditions. Between 1989 and 2009, the 2010 Poverty Study Report highlighted four distinct economic periods in Estonia: transitional reforms, a stabilization period, a period of fast economic development and growth of welfare, and a period of global economic crisis (Kutsar 2010, 59). While today Estonia has moved beyond the global economic crisis of 2008 and is realizing new economic opportunities, one consistent factor through these economic changes has been and continues to be the lower standing of Ida-Virumaa in comparison with the rest of Estonia with regards to economic conditions and poverty. Statistical reporting indicates that Ida-Virumaa is consistently among the lowest in terms of employment, minimum wages, and disposable income levels (Kutsar 2010, 77 and Loode and Poder 2015, 175). The interviewees' comments highlighted these statistical differences. Interviewee #15 pointed out that, *"Our region of Ida-Virumaa is where money is least allocated."*<sup>138</sup> Interviewee #10 also referenced statistics stating, *"Ida-Virumaa is considered the poorest region... it is all based on statistics. We have a lot of people who work under the table that is, moonlighting somewhere, unofficially."*<sup>139</sup> The interviewees, however did not show a consensus that they felt economic conditions in Ida-Virumaa were primarily a result of ethnic discrimination. Interviewee #12 explained that the struggles in Ida-Virumaa were comparable to other places in Estonia: *"In fact, I had an internship in Pärnu and I worked there. And I can say that all the economic problems are the same."*<sup>140</sup> Earlier in this analysis (Section 2.1 "Mentality"), interview #5 suggested that the difference in economic conditions between Narva and other larger cities such as Tallinn and Tartu were more a result of the mentality of the locals in Narva and their unwillingness to plan and develop the city well<sup>141</sup>. Despite the lack of a common explanation for current regional economic variances, the

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<sup>137</sup> "Даже если выучишь язык, все равно есть такое понятие называется «стеклянный потолок», выше него ты не прыгнешь. Все равно на высшем уровне, все начальство, все равно всегда эстонцы. Поэтому есть такие вещи, куда русских не пускают. В рийгикогге всего по-моему два или три русских, всего из 101 человек и три человека русских." (Interviewee #15, P2, Q5)

<sup>138</sup> "У нас такой регион Ида-Вирумаа, куда меньше всего выделяется денег." (Interviewee #15, P2, Q3)

<sup>139</sup> "Ида-вирумаа считается самым бедным регионом...это все опирается на статистику. У нас много людей, кто работает на халтурах, то есть подрабатывает где-то, неофициально." (Interviewee #10, P4, Q7)

<sup>140</sup> "На самом деле, у меня был опыт жизненный и в Пярну, я работала там. И могу сказать, что экономические проблемы у всех одинаковые." (Interviewee #12, P2, Q4)

<sup>141</sup> (Interviewee #5, P4, Q7)

fact remains that economic conditions in Ida-Virumaa are considerably different. A large percentage of Estonia's Russian-speaking population living in Ida-Virumaa is in a separate economic category than other Estonians, thereby further isolating them from ethnic Estonian society. Moreover, this isolation is likely compounded by the earlier mentioned perceptions of ethnic discrimination. The combination of minimal daily interaction with ethnic Estonians, a strong sense of perceived ethnic discrimination, and significant differences in socio-economic conditions clearly places Russian-speaking Estonians in physical, psychological and economic isolation from ethnic Estonians.

Similarly, the interviewees are also isolated from ethnic Russians in Russia as a result of the political border. A direct result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the independence of Estonia, the political border severely altered Narva and Ida-Virumaa's transportation routes; restricted the ease of contact between family members living in Estonia and Russia; and rendered a once simple process to access products, work and amenities found in Russia to a nationally controlled event. While Russia initially made efforts to provide former Soviet Union citizens the opportunity to gain Russian citizenship in the first few years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Estonian regulations prevented dual citizenship, thus forcing those who sought the benefits of Estonian and European citizenship to forego Russian citizenship and consequently making access to Russia and Russian society more difficult (Melvin 1995, 49). Moreover, regulation differences between Russia and the EU prevent easy access for Russian-speaking Estonians to the Russian job market in which their native language would be an asset.

### **Physical and Social Separation from Russians**

The result of these politically implemented regulations over the years has been significant restriction on cross-border interaction, particularly when compared to restriction-free borders that exist within the European Union (EU). As Francisco Martinez highlighted in his study of the border from a Narvan perspective,

The entrance into the European Union and the Schengen area meant abolishing the simplified border-crossing regime established after Estonia regained its independence. Nowadays, silent individuals cross a heavily surveyed bridge that functions as a passage connecting a longer road – from Russia to Europe or vice versa (2016, 216).

As a result of this border, families members on both sides of the Russian/Estonian border are unable to visit each other without the involvement of controlled paperwork which, as interviewee #4 mentioned when discussing border control changes, has an associated cost:

*“And now they are making visas much more expensive.”*<sup>142</sup> In Section 2.2 “Institutional Connections”, interviewee #12 also underlined the cost associated with travel, stating that the Russian visa is more expensive for those who hold an Estonian passport versus those with a grey passport.<sup>143</sup> According to research completed in March 2016 by Native Prospector<sup>SM</sup> <sup>144</sup> however, the cost of cross border travel is not as dramatic or expensive as the interviewees implied. The report stated that,

Narva residents regularly cross the border into Russia by foot or by car to purchase cheaper priced goods. About 1.8 million people and 220,000 cars cross the border between Narva and Ivangorod each year. Narva residents cross the border with multiple-entry visas which are inexpensive and easy to obtain (2016, slide 3).

While considering the visa affordable or expensive can be rather subjective, there are clear and strict monetary and legal actions taken when the border is not respected. Martinez recounted the consequences when two of his interviewees recounted an unintentional border crossing:

Accidental border crossings still occur, as for the fishermen Mikhail Sukhoshin and Alexander Ladur, who crossed the dividing line of the Narva river in November 2014, and were sentenced with two months and nine days in prison. On the edge of the European Union, this zone has a severe visa policy (2016, 216).

Between interviewees’ sentiments, other personal accounts and cross-border research, we can conclude that the changes in cross-border travel since the collapse of the Soviet Union, particularly when coupled with other factors such as cross-border migration security concerns or global economic downturns, have been significant enough (both in cost and complexity) to discourage travel among those Russian-speaking Estonians who would otherwise have an interest in repeated travel between Estonia and Russia. Interviewee #5 listed this restriction as one of the top three areas that should be addressed by the local and national government: *“unhindered crossing of the border, rapid crossing of the border, this is a technical issue.”*<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> “А сейчас делают визы, намного дороже стали делать.” (Interviewee #4, P4, Q1)

<sup>143</sup> (Interviewee #12, P3, Q1d)

<sup>144</sup> Native Prospector<sup>SM</sup> is a research initiative to facilitate and develop a more informed understanding of the operational environment with special focus on terrorist safe havens in the U.S. Army European Command Area of Responsibility (EUCOM AOR). The initiative supports EUCOM and United States Government (USG) planning for indirect, population-centric operations. This report, in response to a Request for Information (RFI), is the first in a series of area assessments of locations in Ida Viru county, Estonia. This report particularly focuses on the city of Narva, Estonia. It is based on open-source research and a Native Researcher (NR) survey of 15 residents of Narva.

<sup>145</sup> “беспрепятственное пересечение границы, быстрого пересечения границы, это технический вопрос” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q7)

Finally, border controls also separate Russian-speaking Estonians from products, services and markets in Russia and the people who offer them – all aspects that influence and shape daily activities and habits. As one of the interviewees from Martinez’s research explained, “Also, if there were no border, it would be possible to create employment there too, and not just here, how it currently happens. Do you know? It takes an hour to cross the border” (2016, 207). While no interviewees in this research specifically expressed a desire to find a job in Russia, they did underline the economic advantages in terms of prices and available goods that were difficult to obtain because of the border. Interviewee #12 explained that many Russian-speaking Estonians are interested in Russian products because, “*In our country, the market for goods and products is much narrower than in Russia.*”<sup>146</sup> In April of 2016, a second Native Prospector<sup>SM</sup> interview-based research in the district of Narva- Joesuu confirmed that individuals who must transit through the border crossing in Narva to access Russia are interested in Russian commodities:

Eleven of the 15 respondents reported frequently crossing the border into Ivangorod, Russia often to purchase goods at a cheaper price. The most common goods respondents identified purchasing included alcohol, cigarettes, electronics, and petroleum gas (2016, slide 11).

The transactions that occur between the people when they do cross the border and interact is particularly important for their identity formation. The descriptions Francisco Martinez provides about Estonian based markets best describe the transactions that occur in Estonian markets (in this case he describes a market in Tallinn), underlining what Russian-speakers are prevented from participating in when excluded from Russian markets:

A market is also a social place, not only a search for profit activity or a purely economic phenomenon.... This market creates certain types of social bonds beyond the aspiration to maximise profit and helps segments of the society find their place in the world. To a great extent, clients and sellers of this market derive their social identities and sense of belonging through their market activities, by means of the social relations they build and their inter-subjective awareness. For instance, here language and ethnic identity can have a particular impact on business. Likewise, relations of reciprocity play an important role in both the provision and distribution of goods. This informal economy continues after socialism to be of crucial importance to households in meeting needs that the market cannot provide (2016, 84).

For those who did seek the more economically priced commodities, Interviewee #4 explained that national regulations continue to restrict how Russian-speaking Estonians interact in Russian markets: “...*there is a tightening of rules: you cannot bring alcohol*

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<sup>146</sup> “В нашей стране рынок товаров и продуктов он намного уже, чем в России.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q5)

*to some extent, you cannot carry cigarettes*”<sup>147</sup> If incentive to travel to Russia continues to decrease based on these restrictive regulations, it is logical to conclude that legal cross-border trade will likely decrease as well, thus further decreasing contact that Russian-speaking Estonians have with ethnic Russians in Russia.

To summarize, in Narva and the surrounding region of Ida-Virumaa, Russian-speaking Estonians can live within a kilometer from ethnic Russians living in Russia (family or unrelated), yet to interact with them requires government issued paperwork in the form of visas or passports (with associated costs); long waiting procedures and security checks each time they cross the border; and restricted access to products (both in terms of imports and exports) and markets (commercial and employment). Thus, despite their commonalities, the Russian-speaking Estonians are politically and to a large extent socially isolated from Russians in Russia in their day-to-day activities, especially if they are unwilling or unable to pay the price, in time and money, to travel to Russia.

### **Isolation from Estonian and Russian Society**

Although the interviewees expressed sentiments of connection with Estonia, ethnic discrimination with regards to job opportunities, work salary and language proficiency have led to isolation and a collective sense that Russian-speakers in Estonia are somehow different. Likewise, political regulations and controlled border procedures separated Russian-speakers in Estonia from Russians in Russia despite their commonalities. As a result, Russian-speaking Estonians are forced to evaluate their social position in contrast to and isolation from that of their ethnic Estonian and Russian counterparts. In other words, how they view themselves is based on conflict orientation where the interviewees focus on their relationship with the larger organization or community (Estonian society and Russian society) through the lens of an ingroup (Russian-speaking Estonians) versus an outgroup (Ethnic Estonians or Ethnic Russians in Russia).

This conflict orientation is the basis for Tajfel’s identity theory. Tajfel argued that collective identities become salient and influence group behavior only when situations stimulate intergroup categorizations and comparisons (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 116). This conflict orientation left the Russian-speaking Estonians economically and linguistically isolated from ethnic Estonians and politically and socially separated from Russians in Russia,

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<sup>147</sup> “Ужесточение идет каких-то правил. Что нельзя алкоголь провозить в какой-то мере, нельзя сигареты провозить.” (Interviewee #4, P4, Q1)

thus forming a community that exhibits aspects of Estonian society and aspects of Russian society but, is neither Russian nor Estonian.

Tajfel's identity theory helps explain how Russian-speaking Estonians have become a unique community as a result of isolation, but what is more important and revealing from the interviews is how this uniqueness is perceived and interpreted by the interviewees. Although there is a clear sense of victimization with regards to the discriminatory practices against the community or unfair political regulations that divide people who otherwise have much in common, the majority of responses indicate that the interviewees' perception of their situation is positive and one of opportunity. This topic was addressed in Lesley Harman's book titled *The Modern Stranger: On Language and Membership*, where marginality (an unwillingness to accept this in-between status) is contrasted with duality (embracing the benefits of having aspects of both sides). To explain this concept Harman references Peter Rose's research (1967) on the marginal man where he presents the way in which a Jewish diaspora community adapted when surrounded by a majority Cristian culture. Harman initially quotes Rose stating:

Complete assimilation into the Christian community is not the goal of the American Jew. This means giving up a part of himself, a part that sometimes even he cannot explain, (p. 471) He is more a part of his community than he is apart from it. He is far more assimilated to the Gentile milieu than his urban cousin [the urban Jew]. But, as indicated below, he remains a Jew. (p. 472) (cited in Harman 1988, 29-30 – brackets in original text)

Harman continues in his own words:

Whereas marginality expresses an unwillingness to be between two worlds — a sense of process, of victimization — duality reflects a positive choice to forge a third way in recognition of the impossibility of either complete assimilation on the one hand, or complete preservation of the old ways on the other. Whereas marginality brings with it a sense that there is resistance — either by the stranger or the host — duality suggests co-operation and mutual acceptance (Harman 1988, 29-30).

It is here where the concept of duality and the sense of willingness to operate in the area considered “in between” mentioned earlier in this analysis can be addressed in full. A majority of the interviewees' responses indicated not only a recognition of their own duality, but also highlighted the interviewees' focus on the opportunities associated with the duality and an assignment of individual responsibility in achieving/obtaining these opportunities. In addition, interviewees also highlighted the generational differences observed among Russian-speaking Estonians and their perception of duality.

### **Recognition and Application of Duality**



From the start of this research, there is a recognized difficulty involved in describing who the interviewees consider themselves to be because of a complex intersection of influences from Russia and Estonia. The most revealing questions of the interviewees' self-recognition of duality on some level were Part 1, Question 6 when 87% chose an answer that included descriptions of Estonian and Russian origin and Part 4, Question 1 where 62% of the interviewees offered their own definition of identity, which also incorporated both Estonian and Russian aspects. Moreover, as in the American Jewish example, the interviewees embraced this in-between status opposed to focusing on a perspective of victimization: *"Well, I respect both the Estonian and the Russian nationality. In other words, I'm loyal to both one and the other."*<sup>148</sup> (Interviewee #4) or *"I want to take the best from all of the cultures .... Of course, I was brought up in Russian literature, but nevertheless I would like to eliminate [cultural prejudice] and not perceive other people on the basis of their nationality"*<sup>149</sup> (Interviewee #12). Interview #9's response demonstrates not only self-recognition, but a personal desire to clarify this duality with others: *"So I couldn't say that I'm like purely Estonian. I understand but, but sometimes I want to explain them [those who ask about my identity] more."*<sup>150</sup> Some interviewees, like interviewee #14, did suggest that duality came as the only option, asking rhetorically, *"I speak Russian, but I live in Estonia, in Europe. And how would I completely integrate? However, I can."*<sup>151</sup> While not as embracing as Interviewee #9's response, interviewee #14 still demonstrates a sense of self-awareness of this duality and a personal decision to make the best of it.

### **Opportunity and Individual Responsibility**

Perhaps just as important as recognizing and positively embracing their duality, is the sense of opportunity the interviewees associated with the unique position of being a Russian-speaking Estonian. Despite the specific concern of salary and job placement in comparison with ethnic Estonians discussed during Section 2.3 "Ethnic Discrimination from Estonians", around two-thirds of the interviewees expressed an overall sense of opportunity to improve one's personal standing in life and the opportunity to provide something to the larger society as mediators between Estonians and Russians. Beginning with statistics among the

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<sup>148</sup> "ну я уважаю как эстонскую национальность, так и русскую национальность. То есть я лояльна и к этим и к этим." (Interviewee #4, P4, Q2)

<sup>149</sup> "Мне хочется взять все лучшее от любой культуры.... Безусловно, я воспитана на литературе русской, но тем не менее мне хотелось бы сейчас отказаться вообще и не воспринимать других людей тоже исходя из их национальности." (Interviewee #12, P4, Q1)

<sup>150</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q2)

<sup>151</sup> "я говорю по-русски, но живу я по-эстонски, по-европейски. И как бы я полностью интернируюсь, как я могу" (Interviewee #14, P4, Q1)

interviewees, when answering the question, “How do you evaluate your opportunities to improve your life compared to other Estonians?” (P2, Q6), 56% stated “equivalent opportunities” and 13% stated “definitely more opportunities” totaling 69% with a positive perspective on opportunities related to life compared to other Estonians (See [Table 5](#)). Similarly, when comparing their educational opportunities to Estonians in other regions (P2, Q5) 63% of the interviewees felt that had just as many opportunities as any other Estonian (See [Table 5](#)). Interviewee #11 stated, *“I believe [we have] equal opportunities. Because for those who study well and are interested in their studies, it means that they have an equal opportunity. I'm not saying that's all. But if there is a goal to get an education, then the opportunities are equal.”*<sup>152</sup> In a later question discussing observed changes over the past seven years, Interviewee #11 implied that if there was not a perception of opportunity or satisfaction, the discontent would have been obvious: *“We are all happy with life. If there were not enough, we would leave, right?”*<sup>153</sup>

<b>Table 5: Responses to Opportunities in Education and life improvement</b>		
	<b>P2, Q5</b>	<b>P2, Q6</b>
<b>Definitely have more opportunities</b>	13%	6%
<b>Have a few more opportunities</b>	25%	25%
<b>Have equivalent opportunities</b>	63%	56%
<b>Have less opportunities</b>	0%	0%
<b>Have significantly less opportunities</b>	0%	13%
<b>No response provided</b>	0%	0%

In addition to benefiting the individual, duality was also described as beneficial to the Russian-speaking community as a whole by placing them in a unique position to serve as a mediator between Estonians and Russians. Interviewee #4 explained that, *“If we have the border so close, we should communicate with each other...we must somehow in some way come to some general agreement.”*<sup>154</sup> The concept of duality allowed interviewee #7 to see the value of understanding and respecting more than one culture: *“Let's just say, I'm for tolerance, that*

<sup>152</sup> “я считаю, равные возможности. Потому что, кто учится хорошо и заинтересован, значит, равные возможности. Я не говорю, что все. Но если есть цель получить это образование, то возможности равные.” (Interviewee #11, P2, Q5)

<sup>153</sup> “Жизнью мы все довольны. Если бы были недовольны, мы бы ушли, правильно?” (Interviewee #11, P4, Q6)

<sup>154</sup> “Если у нас так рядом граница, то мы должны общаться между собой... Ну помириться мы должны уже как-то, к какому-то общему соглашению прийти.” (Interviewee #4, P4, Q1)

is, I respect different cultures and different opinions, due to the fact that we have a multicultural society.”<sup>155</sup> And interviewee #9 expressed that mediating between the two countries has not only been happening since childhood, it was happening during the interview itself: “And in a way, like here right now, I’m defending both sides.”<sup>156</sup> Interviewee #9 adds that this duality is increasingly benefiting individuals and the interaction between Russia and Europe thanks to younger Russian-speaking Estonians and their language efforts,

*... the kids from Russian schools who have managed to acquire Estonian in a really good way.... they have more opportunities because they can connect and... they may be more successful in business. Not only towards Europe but also towards Russia...*<sup>157</sup>

Interviewee #10 agreed that learning the Estonian language offered Russian-speaking Estonians greater opportunities to work as the intermediary between Russians and Estonians:

*More opportunities, definitely more opportunities. It’s becoming more so that Estonians are fluent in English, but they consider Russian a difficult language. And communication in Russian is harder for them. But it’s easier for us to learn the Estonian language. And it is becoming so that we are speaking Estonian more fluently in addition to already speaking Russian fluently.*”<sup>158</sup>

Given the earlier responses from the interviewees on their ability to understand subtler levels of Russian mentality such as humor while also embracing an Estonian mentality for order and structure in their every-day lives, it is no wonder that this ability to go between the two cultures is enhanced by fluency in both languages. More importantly, the recognition of these opportunities by the interviewees again support an overall attitude of embracing their duality as a positive attribute. Interestingly, similar conclusions were also discovered in Ammon Cheskin’s research of the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia when her respondents indicated that, “For most people it was desirable for Latvia to start to utilize its perceived geographical and linguistic advantages vis-a`-vis Russia, and to put more efforts into developing economic ties with Russia” (Cheskin 2013, 306).

In addition to underlining the positive aspects of duality, many of the interviewees responses carried an aspect of personal responsibility, motivation and willingness to confront the challenges duality presents. Interviewee #3 stated,

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<sup>155</sup> “Скажем так, я за толерантность, то есть я уважаю различные культуры и различные мнение, за счет того, что у нас все-таки мультикультурное общество.” (Interviewee #7, P4, Q1)

<sup>156</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q1)

<sup>157</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q6)

<sup>158</sup> “больше возможностей, определенно больше возможностей. У нас получаются так, что эстонцы они хорошо английским владеют, а русский он считается тяжелый язык. И им в коммуникации получается тяжелее. А нам русским проще выучить эстонский язык. И мы получается, и эстонским хорошо владеем и русским свободно.” (Interviewee #10, P2, Q6)

*The main thing is to want it. If you want it, then you will have it. And if you do not want it, then it will not happen for you. It seems to be very much this way to me. Even language courses can be mastered. The main thing is that you want it.*<sup>159</sup>

Interviewee #12 describes these self-motivated youth as “active youth”: *“I meet these children here at the events in the college, in which they participate voluntarily, not because the school makes them. These are the youth that are active....”*<sup>160</sup> Given the significant number of references to individuality the interviewees’ attributed to Estonian influence earlier, it could be argued that their support for this individual responsibility might also originate from interaction with Estonian society. At different points in the interview, comments about proactivity, planning and individual responsibility were placed in comparison with a Soviet or Russian “wait for the government” approach. For example, Interviewee #5 explained:

*...usually it’s like Russian mentality. They are waiting that someone will come and make all done. Will bring some goods, will bring some money and just give it and we all live like Cinderella. It’s not working in Europe. Its worked somewhere maybe years ago in Russia with those companies before that. But here it’s not working. You can’t just sit and wait and someone will give you some goods and money.*<sup>161</sup>

The individual responsibility and motivation towards duality cited by many of the interviewees supports McCall and Simmons’ Role-identity theory where the interviewees focus on themselves as a unique individual operating in different roles with an ability to influence society. In short, this theory centers around the idea that the identity is primarily focused with the concept of “I” or “Me” and the interaction with society based on self-determined or socially obligated roles. The role of a Russian-speaking Estonian as an individual exhibiting duality is obligated based on the unique conditions of Ida-Virumaa and through this role, Russian-speaking Estonians perceive that they can positively influence Estonian and Russian societies.

### **Generational Differences in Duality**

While the concept of duality throughout the interview was described as touching most Russian-speaking Estonians, old and young, a clear generational difference emerged in how the Russian-speaking Estonians addressed the dissonance created when operating in-between being Estonian and being Russian. Returning to the concept of Samnani’s dissonance theory,

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<sup>159</sup> “Главное, что ты хочешь. Если ты хочешь, то у тебя и будет. А если ты не хочешь, то для тебя как будто бы и не делают. Мне кажется, очень многое. Курсы даже языка можно получить. Главное – что ты хочешь.” (Interviewee #3, P2, Q3)

<sup>160</sup> “Я вот этих детей встречаю здесь на мероприятиях в колледже, в которых они участвуют по собственному желанию, не потому что школа отправила. И соответственно, это все-таки именно та часть молодежи, которая активная...” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q6)

<sup>161</sup> (Interviewee #5, Additional Comments, Lines 331-335)

Grigoryev references Yik Wong and Kwong (2006) and states that, “The greater the gap between the perceived identity and cultural values and norms of immigrants and those typical for the host country, the harder it will be for immigrants to integrate into these new circumstances” (Grigoryev 2017, 541-542). Interviewees underlined that older Russian-speakers maintain a stronger connection to present-day Russia as a result of their extended time and experience as a member of the Soviet Union. Interviewee #3 responded to the question “Does the Russian government address your concerns?” (P3, Q1b), by stating that the interviewee’s father likely views the government as addressing his needs more, *“because if you compare, for example, me and my father, who is more towards Russia - he is interested in Russian culture, history – then he, as far as he is concerned, I think, yes. And about me – no.”*<sup>162</sup> In the previous sections of this research, many interviewees explained that this difference, or gap, between the idea of being Soviet and the idea of being Estonian, which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union, manifested itself in many ways among the older generation: traditions, language, custom celebrations, legal rights, and social interaction to name a few. During the earlier referenced panel discussion (*Discussing Identity and Minorities in an Estonian Border City*), Kristina Kallas placed this dramatic change for the older generation in perspective:

There is this term for the Russian-speaking people of the post-Soviet spaces – it is a minoritised majority – they used to be a majority, and then they were minoritised. They were told eventually that “no, no, no, you are now a minority”. And this is a huge identity conflict in them, because they have never thought of themselves ever in their lives growing up as a minority; this was never part of their identity. But overnight they became a minority (2017, 18).

Conversely, the interviews in this research emphasized that among the younger generations there is a closing of this gap; they are observing a change in perspective about identity, the Estonian language, and the strength of one’s “Russianness”. This also aligns with Tomatsu Shibutani and Kian Kwan’s assimilation theory where subsequent, younger generations tend to assimilate or integrate because they are able to close the social distance and relate more with their host country (Alba and Nee 2003, 31). Interviewee #10 stated:

*Well, if you look at young people, then there is a normal relationship. And if you look at the adult generation, such as the grandmothers and grandfathers,*

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<sup>162</sup> “Потому что, если сравнивать, например, меня и моего отца, который больше себя к России - он интересуется российской культурой, историей - то он, по поводу него, я думаю, да. А по поводу меня – нет.” (Interviewee #3, P3, Q1b)

*then they are still – “Well, we are Russian, they are Estonian. We celebrate May 9th and they celebrate Independence Day.”*<sup>163</sup>

Interviewee #12 states,

*Then there's the youth. There are a lot of integration programs, when children from Narva, active children, go and live and study the language in the Estonian environment. And it seems to me that they are very different. They come, they tell their family about the experience. At least, recently, as far as active youth, teenagers and schoolchildren are concerned, they no longer perceive Estonia as something alien.*<sup>164</sup>

Part of this generational shift might be attributed to the change in family connections, as stated in the section discussing family roots. The weakening of these roots due to separation (physical or political) as well as the intermarriage of ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians may blur the line between Russian and Estonian (See section 2.2 “Family Roots”). But, according to some of the interviewees, this generational difference can also be observed from the Estonian side in the form of greater acceptance of Russian-speaking Estonians. Interviewee #3 was quoted earlier (Section 2.1 “Language”) as admitting having Estonian friends that actively work to help her speak Estonian<sup>165</sup>. And interviewee #9 stated that currently there are “*more Russian names in politics, in business.... they have to... prove themselves harder.... But when they do, the Estonian society accepts them... Maybe a couple of years ago it didn't show yet.*”<sup>166</sup>

These comments and observations suggest that the “the gap between the perceived identity and cultural values and norms of immigrants and those typical for the host country” (Grigoryev 2017, 541-542) is decreasing among younger Russian-speaking Estonians. Indeed, Grigoryev argues that as ties to the original culture becomes weaker, “it will be easier and more effective to reduce dissonance through the assimilation preference or integration preference than for those whose original culture is central to their self-identity” (Ibid., 541-542). Francisco Martinez, while participating in the panel discussion, referenced similar conclusions from his research of the Russian minority in Estonia:

The so-called Russians in Estonia, they used to be a majority, nowadays they are a minority because the empire has collapsed, so there is a revanchist

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<sup>163</sup> “ну если смотреть молодежь, то тут идет нормальные отношения. А если смотреть взрослое поколение, ну там бабушки и дедушки, тогда они еще – вот мы там русские, они эстонцы. Мы 9 мая празднуем, а они пускай празднуют день независимости.” (Interviewee #10, P4, Q6)

<sup>164</sup> “Потом еще молодежь. Очень много интеграционных программ, когда дети из Нарвы, активные дети, ездят и живут и изучают язык в Эстонской среде. И вот мне кажется, они очень меняются. Они приезжают, они рассказывают своей семье. По крайней мере, последние мероприятия, где была активная часть молодежи и подростков, школьников. Они уже не воспринимают Эстонию, как нечто чужое.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q6)

<sup>165</sup> (Interviewee #3, P4, Q6)

<sup>166</sup> (Interviewee #9 P4, Q6)

atmosphere, or there has been – now it is perhaps changing with the generational transformation (2017, 13).

The older Russian-speaking generation in Estonia is described by the interviewees as still preferring to “distance themselves” from Estonian values and norms and attempting to adhere primarily to “their original culture”, indicating a preference for the separation strategy reaction in Samnani’s dissonance theory (Grigoryev 2017, 541-542). Meanwhile, the younger generation is increasingly showing a tendency to incorporate aspects of both Estonia and Russia – applying the integration strategy.

To summarize the analysis of duality, the interviewees revealed that many Russian-speaking Estonians are aware of their unique status of being in-between what is considered Russian and what is considered Estonian and this is generally valued as a positive attribute. The younger the individual, the more likely that the Russian-speaking Estonian will willingly incorporate aspects of both Russian and Estonian background and assign a personal responsibility to maximizing the available opportunities offered by being an individual of duality. This individual responsibility and motivation supports McCall and Simmons’ Role-identity theory where the interviewees focus on themselves as a unique individual operating in different roles with an ability to influence society. These conclusions support Francisco Martinez’ discussions in his 2016 doctoral research where he concludes that “Narva plays a crucial role as a mediator and juncture between distinct worlds” (2016, 57). The interviewees perceive themselves as possessing identity traits of both Estonian and Russian origin that make them uniquely qualified to operate successfully between ethnic Estonians and Russians in a way that is not marginalizing. In the words of Grigoryev, “That is, they possess two forms of social capital: bonding with their own group; and bridging to the larger society” (2017, 550).

#### **2.4. Conclusions on Self-perceptions of the Russian-speaking Estonians**

It is now interesting to return to the identity formation theories referenced during the analysis to underline the variety of influences on the interviewees’ self-perception of what constitutes a Russian-speaking Estonian. Ashmore and Jussim summarize the four theories by stating that:

McCall and Simmons and Stryker (and those who draw from their work) generally tend to presume that social roles are the primary bases for "me" states; Tajfel and Turner (and those who draw from their work) generally presume that large-scale social categories and groups are the primary bases for "we" states. The social psychological literature has often equated social roles with me's and large-scale group categories with we's (1997, 123).

In other words, the first two theories center around the idea that the identity is primarily focused with the concept of “I” or “Me” and the interaction with society based on self-determined or socially obligated roles. The third and fourth theories on the other hand, are more concerned with the concept of “Us” or “We” and how this perspective is based on relative comparison with an outgroup or an ability to find commonality with others who share similar characteristics. Ashmore and Jussim conclude that each of these theories has its strong points and weaknesses and they may be influenced by the context surrounding the identity in question. In this analysis, interviewees provided multiple supporting examples for all four of these theories.

Individuality, individual responsibility and self-motivation (in their mental approach, in business operations or in maximizing their duality) cited by many of the interviewees supports McCall and Simmons’ Role-identity theory where the interviewees focus on themselves as a unique individual operating in different roles with an ability to influence society. This was evident by the interviewees’ conviction that a Russian-speaking Narvan’s future and access to life opportunities is dependent on how hard they study, how well they learn Estonian, and how willing they are to accept their role as in-between two cultures. Nevertheless, this individuality was somewhat restricted when family ties with Russia caused some of the interviewees to see themselves as an individual attempting to operate within the role of “Russian” in-order to meet the expectations resultant of their Russian family roots. This is a clear support of Striker’s Identity theory where behavioral expectations dictate what they should do based on the number of relationships (social ties) a particular role has. This theory also implies that the less family ties with Russians in Russia, then the more likely Russian-speaking Estonians will execute roles that are more related to and dependent on roles defined by Estonians and Estonian culture.

When it comes to Tajfel’s Social Identity Theory, the interviewees isolation from both Estonians and Russians as a result of discrimination and restricted social interaction caused the interviewees to view themselves as a unique ingroup, in opposition to the outgroups (Estonians and Russians). Despite their isolation, interviewees justified adopting many of the social and mental preferences of the Estonian society while simultaneously valuing their historical and cultural ties to Russia, because they still perceived a similarity of interests or goals with the two larger societies. The formation of their self-perception is therefore also based on Turner’s theory, where commonalities and characteristics allowed the interviewees to relate to both Estonians and Russians.



The emergence of this separate and distinct perception of what it means to be a Russian-speaking Estonian is further supported by Ashmore and Jussim's explanation of how different identities can merge.

Alternatively, multiple identities may merge or fuse into one entity. For example, a woman may come to think of herself not only as a wife or a traditional woman but as a homemaker. Her gender-role orientation may shape her enactment of the wife identity to such an extent that the two become inseparable and are experienced—and perhaps even cognitively processed—in a unitary manner. When multiple identities are conjoined (e.g., student activist) or are fused within a single self-descriptive term (e.g., breadwinner = adult, parent, gainfully employed), their meaning and behavioral consequences may reside in the amalgamation itself” (1997, 128-129).

In short, the traits discovered through this interview reveal that the interviewees drew equally from identity orientations described as individual and collective (“me” and “we”). When considering the two larger societal influences in question (Estonian and Russian) and bearing in mind the comment made by interviewee #9: *“Russian and Estonian cultures are very different. One is individualized another is collectivist cultures.”* then it is perhaps logical that the merging of these two identities would yield a community that has found a balance between “me” and “we”. Additionally, the interviews suggest that this self-perception is somewhat fluid and influenced by the demands of the surrounding environment. This explains the conflict and dissonance observed in the interviewees responses which Ashmore and Jussim quote McCall and Simmons as explaining, “...discrepancies between one's ideal self and one's situational self, producing pressures to validate” (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 110). Ashmore and Jussim also quote McCall and Simmons to further explain that this attempt to answer the question “Who am I” and “Who are we” is a never ending process, likening it to “dusting a huge old house: by the time one gets to the upstairs, the downstairs is badly in need of dusting again (1978, p. 163 as cited in Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 110).

Although there are unresolved issues between these theories that cannot fully explain all aspects of self-perception, identity formation or the role of the individual versus the collective, using these models and theories has demonstrated the complexity of the Russian-speaking Estonian's case and rendered meaningless the idea that simple one-word labels such as Russian or Estonian could in anyway describe the unique people or environment of Narva and Ida-Virumaa. Indeed, this research supports Professor Chris Weedon's claims that a hybrid identity has formed by combining aspects of Estonian and Russian cultures. Nevertheless, we have arrived at a point where we can answer the first question of this research: Do Russian-speaking Estonians self-identify more as a member of Estonian society or a compatriot of

Russia? The interviewees indicated that despite feelings towards and connections with Russia, there is a clear recognition that they are a member of Estonian society and that there is almost no connection with Russia through the term compatriot. So initially, it appears that the answer is “a member of Estonian society.” This relationship however, is complex. Interviewees explained that as a member of Estonian society they often experience discrimination, economic hardship and social exclusion while concerning Russian society, they still desire to cultivate their relationship with regards to language, culture and cross-border transactions even if they do not consider themselves compatriots. In short, who they consider themselves to be is pushed, pulled and influenced by both sides – they see themselves as in the middle.

### **Section 3. Where do I/We belong?**

While the interviewees’ responses suggest that Russian-speaking Estonians consider themselves to be in the middle, this does not imply that they are equidistant between what they consider Russian and what they consider Estonian. Moreover, the theories cited and the interviewees themselves admitted to the constant fluctuation of the situation based on changing aspects in the surrounding environment. But to determine where the community sees itself, we need a way to measure where along the scale of in-betweenness the Russian-speaking Estonians lie. To accomplish this, we will introduce and discuss the aspects of belongingness that presented themselves during the interviews. While describing who they consider themselves, the interviewees also shed light on how they feel about their relationships with Russian and Estonian societies. Did they feel more at home among one of the two societies? Which country seemed to provide them a greater feeling of inclusion and conversely which country stimulated a greater feeling of exclusion? What factors made them feel this way? In short, we will use the interviewees descriptions on how the two countries made them feel to measure where they perceive themselves along the scale between Russian and Estonian. Analyzing these responses will help answer research question 2: Do Russian-speaking Estonians have a clear preference for one country over another?

#### **3.1. Belongingness**

Marco Antonsich states that “belonging should be analyzed both as a personal, intimate, feeling of being ‘at home’ in a place (place-belongingness) and as a discursive resource which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)” (“Searching” 2010, 644). The concept of evaluating the place-belongingness of

post-soviet minority groups is not a new concept. The idea that a Russian-speaking community's belongingness might be unclear since the community could associate belongingness to a place of residence (like Estonia in this case) and to their historical homeland (Russia or the Soviet Union), has led others to research which place might evoke a greater sense of belongingness (Cheskin 2016 and Kallas 2016).

Antonsich argues however, that place-belongingness is not the only aspect worth considering. He states that place-belongingness is inconclusive without also understanding the interviewees' socio-spatial inclusion and the discourse surrounding it (Antonsich "Searching" 2010, 649). Equipped with a better understanding of how the interviewees view themselves and evaluate the position of the larger Russian-speaking population in Narva and Ida-Virumaa, we will use this information to identify the common discourses of belongingness presented by the interviewees. These discourses will simultaneously identify the most important aspects of socio-spatial inclusion according to the interviewees and provide an indication on which country the Russian-speaking Estonians feel creates a greater sense of belongingness.

### **3.2. Place-Belongingness**

The concept of place belongingness, where the idea of feeling at home represents, "a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment" (Antonsich 2010, 646), was indirectly addressed in Section 2.1 "Residency", when interviewees attributed a sense of familiarity and comfort with Estonia. Place belongingness towards Estonia was manifested in responses about residency, citizenship and their reasoning for using the term "Estonian" in their self-description: "*Well, how can I say this, I'm sort of Russian, but I live in Estonia*".<sup>167</sup> (Interviewee #7) In reviewing Antonsich's elaboration of place-belongingness in a separate article titled "*Meanings of place and aspects of the Self: an interdisciplinary and empirical account*", the interviewees' connection with Estonia is not surprising as Antonsich attributes length of residency to playing a critical role in developing familiarity with a location (Antonsich 2010, 122).

Just as important as the interviewees' affirmation of place-belongingness to Estonia, is their indication that it would be difficult for them to establish a similar belongingness in Russia because of feelings of uncomfortableness and insecurity. The majority of these feelings were discovered when answering the question, "What makes you different from Russians living in Russia?" (P4, Q4). Interviewee #3 stated, "*I live in Estonia, I want to live in Estonia, and I will*

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<sup>167</sup> "ну как сказать, я вроде как и русская, но живу в Эстонии" (Interviewee #7, P4, Q1, Line 123)

*live in Estonia, I will be an Estonian citizen. I'm scared of Russia a little, honestly .... In general, I would not want to live in Russia.*"<sup>168</sup> And Interviewee #7 said, *"...let's say, if I come to Russia...I will most likely be somehow uncomfortable there. That is, I live here in Estonia, even though I speak Russian, I'm comfortable here."*<sup>169</sup> Interviewee #9 attributed this uncomfortable feeling to cultural differences, *"I don't think I would be comfortable living in Russia. Because I'm, more European or well, it would be difficult for me to adjust to the ways of Russian culture."*<sup>170</sup> Interviewee #10 stated, *"I come to Russia and I do not feel safe."*<sup>171</sup>

Some of the interviewees offered reasons why there might not be a similar sense of place-belongingness with Russia. Interviewee #12 suggests that since Narva is such a small town in comparison to places in Russia, such as Moscow or Saint Petersburg, maybe Russian-speaking Estonians feel uncomfortable in Russia where there are more people and life is drastically different from "small-town" life: *"...perhaps, it is a comparison of a resident of a small city and a resident of a large city. And maybe there are such differences everywhere. They [large city residents] are more assertive. Residents of small towns are less daring."*<sup>172</sup> Yet, interviewee #10 suggested that even in a small town, Russia evoked a sense of insecurity: *"In Russia they are too active. I, for example, have a visa, I come to the town of Ivangorod [Narva's sister city] and I already feel in danger. There is no security, I want to return back here [to Estonia] quickly."*<sup>173</sup> Interviewee #15 suggested that it may be a result of the greater order and discipline that exists in Estonia compared to Russia: *"That is, it is calmer here, and we have become more law-abiding ourselves."*<sup>174</sup> While interviewee #16 explained that the differences may lie in the perceptions of political freedoms that Estonia offers: *"The political advantage of living in a freer country. Russia is currently not free."*<sup>175</sup> Whatever the justification, the interviewees clearly establish that there is minimal place-belongingness associated with Russia.

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<sup>168</sup> "я живу в Эстонии, я хочу жить в Эстонии, и я буду жить в Эстонии, я буду гражданкой Эстонии. Меня пугает Россия немного, честно...Вообще я бы не хотела жить в России." (Interviewee #3, P4, Q4)

<sup>169</sup> "... допустим, если я приеду в Россию.... Мне будет скорее всего как-то некомфортно там. То есть я живу здесь в Эстонии, пускай я говорю на русском, но мне здесь комфортно." (Interviewee #7, P4, Q4)

<sup>170</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q4)

<sup>171</sup> "Я вот в Россию прихожу, и я не чувствую себя безопасно." (Interviewee #10, P4, Q5)

<sup>172</sup> "... возможно, это сравнение жителя маленького города и жителя большого города. И возможно, тут везде есть такие различия. Они более напористые. Жители маленьких городков менее смелые." (Interviewee #12, P4, Q4)

<sup>173</sup> "В России они слишком активные. Я вот, допустим, у меня есть виза, я прихожу в Ивангород, и я уже чувствую себя опасно, нет безопасности, хочется обратно сюда вернуться по-быстрому." (Interviewee #10, P4, Q4)

<sup>174</sup> "То есть здесь спокойнее, ну и мы стали более законопослушными сами." (Interviewee #15, P4, Q4)

<sup>175</sup> "Политическое преимущество жить в более свободной стране. Россия в настоящее время несвободна." (Interviewee #16, P4, Q4)

This lack of place-belongingness in a physical sense appears to correspond with what Ammon Cheskin discovered when conducting similar research on the Russian-speaking population in Latvia.

When asked what the respondents considered to be their homeland (*Rodina*), they were unanimous in citing Latvia. Then, when asked if Russia also represented some form of homeland, the participants agreed that it did. One undergraduate referred to Russia as their ‘secondary (*vtorostepnyi*) homeland’, others as their ‘spiritual homeland’ (2013, 295-296).

Although the interview questions in this research did not go beyond the concept of physical place-belongingness to explore concepts of a spiritual place-belongingness, the aspects of culture, language, family and history that Cheskin attribute to creating this spiritual homeland did correspond with the influences that the interviewees presented as their strongest connections with Russia during Section 2.2 “Family Roots” and “Cultural Roots”. However, the noticeable disassociation with the Russian-speaking community of Georgia (P3, Q2) and the lack of reference to other Russian-speaking communities outside of Russia in general suggest that the Russian-speaking Estonians would likely not extend the concept of an imaginary homeland to include the larger “Russian-speaking community”. For this research, we therefore conclude that the interviewees clearly assign place-belongingness to Estonia.

### **3.3. Interviewees’ Discourses on Belongingness**

As the interviewees explained how they came to their conclusions about their self-perceptions, they also presented the subjects and issues that they considered most critical in the discourse about their socio-spatial inclusion. Even with the numerous and at times conflicting opinions and issues discussed by the interviewees, three broad topics surfaced among the responses as being central in the interviewees’ discourse on socio-spatial inclusion: 1) Education, particularly with regards to the Estonian and Russian languages, 2) the environment of Ida-Virumaa and 3) the physical exposure to ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians. The interviewees consistent references to these three discourses underline their criticality in understanding who they are and how they assess their social inclusion or exclusion vis-à-vis Estonia and Russia.

#### **Education Discourse**

Beginning with the discourses addressing education and language, we have already established that this topic was not only the immediate way for the interviewees to describe themselves when reflecting: on the question “Who am I?” and “Who are we?” (“*I speak*

*Russian, but I live in Estonia*”<sup>176</sup>), but through this discourse, interviewees also expressed feelings of belongingness. Within this discourse, feelings of inclusion were balanced with feelings of exclusion. For example, interviewees suggested that continuing education in Estonian for younger generations will further improve interaction with ethnic Estonians<sup>177</sup> and create more opportunities in the job market<sup>178</sup>, demonstrating feelings of social inclusion. Likewise, social exclusion was highlighted when interviewees criticized a lack of focus on Russian proficiency and education, to the detriment of older Russian-speaking Estonians in need of social support<sup>179</sup> and younger Russian-speaking Estonians pursuing higher education<sup>180</sup>. The interviewees own recognition of the importance of education in improving their sense of belongingness aligns with conclusions by numerous researchers in this field. As Anu Toots and Triin Lauri explain in the 2012/2013 Estonian Human Development Report,

Education’s second, cultural and political task is to increase social cohesion.... According to several studies, educated people are more tolerant, are greater supporters of democracy (Mc Mahon 2004), behave more constructively in regard to their health (Grossmann 2000), are happier (Putnam, Helliwell 1999) and cope better on the labour market. The economic and social functions of education are intertwined, because modern economies and democracies presuppose the existence of socially sensitive people with open mindsets, who are able to quickly adapt to new working collectives and cultures, and to intelligently and actively participate in public life (Heidmets 2013, 30).

The sentiments of exclusion were particularly focused on the use of the Russian language at the upper levels of the Estonian education system. It is cited as a source of exclusion because it is seen as discrimination based on native language. According to the interviewees, this exclusion causes students who choose to study in Russian and focus less on Estonian to have fewer opportunities later in life (P2, Q5). Interviewee #14 explains,

*in any case, I think that one of the most important principles of integration is the possibility of receiving an education in schools both in Russian and in Estonian. That is, we are not restricted in our right to study. That is, it is possible to speak your language at school as well as Estonian. This gives us two paths.*<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> “я говорю по-русски, но живу я по-эстонски” (Interviewee #14, P4, Q1)

<sup>177</sup> (Interviewee #12, P4, Q6)

<sup>178</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q6)

<sup>179</sup> (Interviewee #11, P2, Q4)

<sup>180</sup> (Interviewee #15, P2, Q5)

<sup>181</sup> “в любом случае я думаю, что одним из важнейших принципов интеграции является возможность обучения в школах как на русском, так и на эстонском. То есть нас не ограничивают в правах на обучение. То есть есть возможность говорить на своем языке в школе. И также на эстонском. Нам дают два пути.” (Interviewee #14, P4, Q6)

Interviewee #9 agreed with this perspective stating, *“the opportunity for Russians to learn Estonian without being forced to do so... that you protect your identity, your culture. But, at the same time you are able to, to participate in the life in the rest of the country.”*<sup>182</sup>

In addition to discussing education itself, this discourse also handles the generational difference discussed earlier between younger Russian-speaking Estonians (up to about age 35) and older Russian-speaking Estonians. The interviewees described high level of exclusion with the older generation and high levels of inclusion with younger generations when discussing the Estonian language. Similarly, the interviewees expressed feelings of exclusion for the younger generation that was unable to study in and practice Russian regularly. There was not however, a greater feeling of inclusion among the older generation based on their education or proficiency in Russian. Overall, the balance between inclusion and exclusion as a result of education suggests that this discourse is heavily dependent on the age of the Russian-speaking Estonian and the language in question.

### **Ida-Virumaa Environment Discourse**

Discussions about the environment of Ida-Virumaa and Narva were primarily focused on feelings of exclusion, often describing residents of Ida-Virumaa as living in a region that is poor economically, politically and culturally. Although the interviewees underlined the ethnic discrimination involved with difficulty in securing work and sufficient wages, the issue of work was also a stand-alone issue in Ida-Virumaa concerning availability of jobs and sufficient wages. Particularly in response to the open-ended question where interviewees were asked to list the top three issues facing Ida-Virumaa or Narva, employment and wages was among the top three. Interviewee #6 listed, *“issues of unemployment, work, and sufficient wages for work.”*<sup>183</sup> Interviewee #1 stated that Narva’s main concern was a *“question of wages and jobs...”*<sup>184</sup> Interviewee #2 agreed stating, *“In Narva we don’t have enough jobs...”*<sup>185</sup> Interviewee #11 listed, *“work, work difficulties...”*<sup>186</sup> and interviewee #3 considered jobs as the top issue needing improvement.<sup>187</sup> Interviewee #13 claimed that workers in the area were in need of an

*increase of salaries. Because we have a lot of people who in Ida-Virumaa get below average, below the minimum.... And the salary already depends on the availability of jobs, because there are very few of them in Ida Virumaa. We have*

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<sup>182</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q7)

<sup>183</sup> “вопросы безработицы, работы, достойной оплаты этой работы.” (Interviewee #6, P4, Q7)

<sup>184</sup> “...вопрос заработной платы, рабочих мест...” (Interviewee #1, P4, Q7)

<sup>185</sup> (Interviewee #2, P4, Q7)

<sup>186</sup> “... работа, трудности с работой” (Interviewee #11, P4, Q7)

<sup>187</sup> (Interviewee #3, P4, Q7)

*many from Estonia who go either to Tallinn, or to Finland and Sweden to work.*<sup>188</sup>

In addition to poor wages, interviewees felt that the corruption in their region separated them from the rest of Estonia, making up a second subcategory of this discourse. Interviewee #9 explained that the political environment in Ida-Virumaa is one that still runs on corruption: “...the elections...are rigged here.” When asked to specify at what level one could observe political corruption, Interviewee #9 specified the municipal level, underlining that it extended beyond just Narva but was specific to Ida-Virumaa: “I don’t think that the... [national] government election would be as much influenced [by corrupt individuals].”<sup>189</sup> Interviewee #12 elaborates on this municipal corruption stating,

*It seems to me now, since the elections were held recently, the most important topic, which is discussed in the media and online, is that the same people who were in power before the elections remained in power. And there are a lot of questions; how did it happen that people who are convicted, again took positions of power in Narva. And yet everyone is discussing that everyone has faced, everyone knows that some people were offered money in elections so that they would vote. And why do the authorities not react to this in any way? Why, for example, are there no criminal cases about the fact that votes were bought up in Narva? And people with criminal experience, with a criminal past are again in power, are making choices for the entire population, deciding the future of our city? This is what is most urgent now.*<sup>190</sup>

Interviewee #4 expressed a sense of frustration that the political environment in Ida-Virumaa has been and always will be this way: “But still, I believe nothing will change.”<sup>191</sup> Interviewee #15 echoed interviewee #12 stating,

*Centrists here in Narva have won for 12-13 years. We are all tired of it. But everyone knows perfectly well how people are selected from among us, how people go to dormitories, collect alcoholics and then take them to vote. Absolutely, and everything practically before our very eyes.... And in the end,*

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<sup>188</sup> “повышение зарплат. Потому что у нас очень много людей, которые в Ида-Вирумаа получают ниже среднего, ниже минимального.... А от зарплат уже зависит и наличие рабочих мест, потому что в Ида-Вирумаа их очень мало. У нас же очень многие из Эстонии ездят работать либо в Таллинн, либо же в Финляндию и Швецию.” (Interviewee #13, P4, Q7)

<sup>189</sup> (Interviewee #9, P3, Q1d)

<sup>190</sup> “мне кажется, сейчас, так как выборы прошли совсем недавно, самая важная такая тема, которая обсуждается во всех средствах массовой информации и на интернет-порталах, то, что у власти остались те же люди, которые были и до выборов. И масса вопросов, как так получилось, что люди, которые осуждены, они опять заняли позиции у власти в Нарве. И еще все обсуждают, что все сталкивались, все знают, что кому-то предлагали деньги на выборах, чтобы они проголосовали. И почему органы власти никак на это не реагируют? Почему, например, никаких дел уголовных не заведено по факту того, что в Нарве скупались голоса? И люди с криминальным опытом, с криминальным прошлым снова у власти, делают выбор за все население, решают будущее нашего города? Вот это самое актуальное сейчас.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q7)

<sup>191</sup> “Но все равно же ничего не изменится, я считаю.” (Interviewee #4, P4, Q7)



*centrists win again, every year. Theft flourishes in full. Everyone knows that they cannot do anything. I do not know why.*<sup>192</sup>

Interviewee #16 simply stated, *“In Ida-Virumaa, the [political] power has not changed.”*<sup>193</sup> In a slightly different thread, but still a support for the poor conditions of the region, Interviewee #16 also mentioned that Ida-Virumaa is under threat of depopulation: *“And in Ida-Virumaa the population is constantly falling, that is, it is getting old, people are dying and young people are leaving... the population is constantly decreasing in Ida-Virumaa.”*<sup>194</sup>

A final sub-category of the Ida-Virumaa environment that promoted feelings of exclusion focused on the lack of cultural events and attractions within the area compared to other areas of Estonia and Russia. Interviewee #9 explained that *“But still you don’t have... culture. Like you don’t have a theater here. You don’t have a concert hall here. So, the Estonians from the rest of the country do not have enough reason to come here.”* And interviewee #3 stated,

*Where to go in the evening, what to do in the evening. Kohtla-Järve and Narva are places where there is nothing to do. You can walk, you can go to eat (there are a couple of places there). You can go to the culture house, but this is for children, there are all sorts of big clubs for kids. And me and my friends are just sitting at home. And there just isn’t a way to go somewhere and experience something new. For me, the question of leisure is open. I live there, I come for the weekend. I want to go somewhere with my mother, I’m going to hang with my friends. There is no decent place there. Therefore, everyone leaves or is self-destructive.*<sup>195</sup>

When the Native Prospector<sup>SM</sup> survey conducted in 2016 asked Russian-speaking Estonians from Ida-Virumaa to explain why they travel to Russia, “Three respondents [out of 15] reported traveling to Russia often for cultural events such as ballets and concerts” (2016, slide 11).

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<sup>192</sup> “Центристы вот в Нарве которые побеждают уже 12-13 лет. Надоели всем. Но все прекрасно знают, как у нас покупаются голоса, как у нас ездят люди по общежитиям, собирают алкоголиков и потом везут их голосовать. Абсолютно у всех практически на глазах... И в итоге побеждают опять центристы, каждый год. Воровство процветает по полной программе. Все знают, сделать ничего не могут. Не знаю, почему.” Interviewee #15, P4, Q12)

<sup>193</sup> “в Ида-Вирумаа власть не менялась” (Interviewee #16, P4, Q6)

<sup>194</sup> “И в Ида-Вирумаа постоянно падает население, то есть оно стареет, люди умирают и молодые уезжают. То есть получается, что население постоянно уменьшается в Ида-Вирумаа.” (Interviewee #16, P4, Q6)

<sup>195</sup> “Куда сходить вечером, что делать вечером. Вот именно в кохляярви, в Нарве есть места, а там нечего делать. Ты можешь погулять, ты можешь сходить поесть (там есть пара мест). Ты можешь сходить в дом культуры, но это для детей там больше кружки всякие. А мне со своими друзьями – только дома сидеть. А сходить куда-нибудь, чтобы это было что-то новое. Вот нет. Для меня вопрос досуга открытый. Я живу там, я приезжаю на выходные. Я хочу даже вот с мамой куда-то сходить, с друзьями потнцевать. Приличного места там нет. Поэтому все и уезжают или занимаются саморазрушением.” (Interviewee #3, P4, Q7)

Interviewee #12 did indicate however, that some effort has been made to increase Ida-Virumaa's attractiveness to outsiders within the past few years:

*A summer marathon gathers up to several thousand. And many people come who have never been to Narva. They discover for themselves. Before there was always a stereotype, for 20 years, that Narva is a very dangerous city. And now the Estonians who come here are now saying [realizing] that this was a stereotype.*<sup>196</sup>

Nevertheless, across the different economic, political and cultural areas that are unique to Ida-Virumaa the overall perception from the interviewees was that the region placed them in a condition that was more disadvantaged than their neighboring Estonian and, with regards to culture, Russian regions. Thus, the discourse on the Ida-Virumaa environment is one of exclusion with an emphasis on the longevity and unchangeability of this exclusion.

### **Physical Interaction Discourse**

The final discourse revolves around the physical interaction with ethnic Estonians and Russians. This discourse was also one that was primarily focused on exclusion. Those that identified opportunities to have closer contact with ethnic Estonians indicated a need to travel outside of Ida-Virumaa to meet this engagement. With the exception of a few references to recent events, this lack of contact was also a result of insufficient attractions within Ida-Virumaa to bring ethnic Estonians into the region. The discourse on the Estonian side dealt mostly with the recognition that daily activities occurred without the need or ability to interact, highlighting what was perceived as economic and ethnic discrimination by the Russian-speaking Estonians. On a similar note, there is a sense of exclusion from contact with ethnic Russians, however the focus seems to be more on the economic and political advantages this connection would provide for Russian-speaking Estonians than on a sense of discrimination. While the interviewees expressed desires to increase interaction with ethnic Russians in Estonia (mainly by increasing tourism) and in Russia (through more accessible border control policies) the discourse does not emphasize the social exclusion from Russian society as the primary concern. It is rather a concern that less interaction with Ethnic Russians will disadvantage Russian-speaking Estonians economically – it would be a missed opportunity to maximize their duality. Overall, the discourse is one focused on exclusion with the community offering suggests that would increase their interaction with ethnic Estonians and Russians to improve

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<sup>196</sup> “Марафон летний собирает до нескольких тысяч. И многие приезжают, кто не был никогда в Нарве. Они открывают для себя. И потом всегда был стереотип, на протяжении 20 лет, что Нарва это очень опасный город. И вот эстонцы как раз, которые приезжают сюда, как раз и говорят о том, что с этим прощаются стереотипом.” (Interviewee #12, P4, Q6)

their social inclusion in Estonian society and their economic position as unique individuals capable of interacting with ethnic Russians.

### **Conclusions from the Discourse Analysis**

The three primary discourses concerning how the Russian-speaking Estonians evaluate their socio-spatial inclusion focused heavily on the significant exclusion they experience as a community. Initially, these feelings of exclusion not only seem to provide further support for Tajfel's social identity theory focused on conflict orientation where the community defines itself (the ingroup) in opposition to the surrounding societies (outgroups), but also suggest that the community may have weak feelings of belongingness for both countries. A closer review of the discourses however, reveals a commonality among the responses that indicates a rather strong sense of belongingness to Estonia. Within each of the discourses is a consistent proposal to address the issue and improve Russian-speaking Estonians' inclusion in society with Estonia, not Russia. For example, the discourse on education concentrated heavily on proposals to improve the ability to study Estonian as a means of improving social inclusion. When education in Russian was addressed, the emphasis was placed on improving its use and acceptance in Estonia as a way to improve Russian-speaking Estonians' status and opportunities, not as a means to access Russian society. Education in general was considered a desired objective among many of the respondents because of the opportunities it allowed for future success, yet education in Russia was rarely mentioned as a means to achieve this goal. The key to resolving the education discourse according to the interviewees lies in Estonia, not in Russia. Within the discourse concerning the environment of Ida-Virumaa, we can also see a similar focus on improving the inclusion within Estonian society. Economically, the interviewees continually compared themselves to the conditions of others in Estonia and Europe, even with Ivangorod, their sister city right across the bridge, few comparisons were made with Russia. Discussions of the political corruptness of Ida-Virumaa likened an improvement of the situation to western and European countries and a worsening of the situation to approaching situations in Russia. This preference for comparing themselves to other areas in Estonia was also observed when discussing the cultural exclusion of Ida-Virumaa, again suggesting that the objective was to be more like the rest of Estonia. In the final discourse and solutions proposed by the interviewees on physical contact with ethnic Estonians and Russians, a cursory observation seems to indicate a balance in the desire to improve contact with ethnic Estonians (school programs traveling to other parts of Estonia) and ethnic Russians (improve border relations and ease restrictions to facilitate better interaction). However, cross-border relations only superficially focus on improving contact with Russians, the focus is primarily on improving the economic benefits

for the community. As interviewee #16 explained, the second recommendation to improve the region is by improving “...relations with Russia, because Ida-Virumaa it’s right next door to Russia. That means, the better the relationship with Russia, the better for the Narvans.”<sup>197</sup> Thus the goal is similar to what was observed with improving the Russian language, not as a means to seek better inclusion in Russian society, rather as a way to improve the condition of the Russian-speaking Estonian community in relation to the rest of Estonia.

These discourses suggest a strong desire among the Russian-speaking Estonians to improve their relationship with Estonia, making it of higher importance and suggesting that the Russian-speaking Estonians are situated closer on the scale of belongingness to Estonia. The fact that there were opportunities to improve belongingness with Russia (schooling in Russia, increased travel/trips to Russia) but the interviewees did not suggest or introduce these proposals indicates that belongingness for the community is focused more on Estonia. There is a clear motivation and desire for greater inclusion as well as economic and cultural improvement vis-à-vis Estonia. Now that we have established a) how the interviewees perceive themselves and the Russian-speaking community and b) the country with whom the interviewees have a greater belongingness, we can conclude with general assessments about what this information indicates about the Russian-speaking community’s role and influence at the national level.

#### **Section 4. Discussions and Recommendations**

This research has discovered that the Russian-speaking Estonians consider themselves as having embraced their duality; psychologically, linguistically and culturally. We have also discovered that although they declare that they have formed a community that is unique from its surrounding environment, functioning almost as a bridge between Estonia and Russia, they still show a greater sense of belongingness to Estonia. But what does this mean for the community moving forward? What can Russian and Estonian take from this research? Can the self-perceptions of Russian-speaking Estonians be applied to other Russian-speaking communities outside of Russia? Using the analysis on self-perception and belongingness, we will offer conclusions on what this information tells us about the community’s willingness to mobilize to address the identified issues of exclusion and offer recommendations for both countries to consider when considering the Russian-speaking population. These discussions

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<sup>197</sup> “...отношения с Россией, потому что Ида-Вирумаа, оно прям вот соседствует с Россией. То есть чем лучше отношения с Россией, тем лучше для нарвитян.” (Interviewee #16, P4, Q7)

will also provide a starting point for future research to further explore how intercultural encounters shape social, economic and political frameworks of the modern world.

#### **4.1 Thoughts on Community Mobilization**

The discovery of who the community considers itself to be and where they feel they belong has brought to light many of the issues that challenge the Russian-speaking Estonians' sense of inclusion in both Estonian and Russian society, as well as the interviewees' opinions on solutions addressing exclusion and discrimination. The interviewees' self-reflection on the community and discourses on belongingness revealed a sense of duality and an expectation of personal responsibility among Russian-speaking Estonians to meet the challenges of their unique situation. Finally, although we assessed their belongingness to favor Estonia, discourse surrounding their socio-spatial inclusion focused heavily on perpetual exclusion, particularly as a result of Ida-Virumaa's poor environment. The interviewees repeatedly offered examples of successful integration, inclusion and progress, but the majority of the examples occurred outside of Ida-Virumaa: language immersion in other areas of Estonia<sup>198</sup>, improved job opportunities for Russian-speakers outside of Ida-Virumaa<sup>199</sup>, better integration between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians in Tallinn<sup>200</sup> or greater cultural and business opportunities in Tartu.<sup>201</sup> Perhaps more telling, some interviewees suggested that this would always be the case for the Russian-speaking community in Ida-Virumaa. In the words of interviewee #16,

*And now this situation in Ida-Virumaa has been going on for a very long time, that nothing is changing, well, that is stagnation. And this is the difference between Russians who do not live in Ida-Virumaa, and Russians who live in other parts of Estonia, that is, they have more opportunities. And those Russians who distance themselves from the government, are all types of active people, they either do their own thing here, or simply leave from here. The second option, unfortunately, is more popular.*<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> (Interviewee #12, P4, Q6 and Interviewee #10, P4, Q7)

<sup>199</sup> (Interviewee #16, P4, Q6)

<sup>200</sup> (Interviewee #13, P4, Q12)

<sup>201</sup> (Interviewee #5, P4, Q7)

<sup>202</sup> “И сейчас такая ситуация в Ида-Вирумаа уже очень давно, что ничего не меняется, ну то есть стагнация. И вот это вот отличие между русскими, которые живут не в Ида-Вирумаа, и русскими, которые живут в других частях Эстонии, то есть у них больше возможностей. А те русские, которые не связывают себя полностью от правительства, они такие всякие активные, то они либо здесь делают что-то свое, либо уезжают просто отсюда. Второй вариант, к сожалению, более популярен.” (Interviewee #16, P4, Q6)

This continuation of unsatisfactory conditions even though the interviewees suggested that the community had clearly identified the problems as well as many viable solutions, is noteworthy. The interviewees consistently indicated that they held an expectation for Russian-speaking Estonians to take personal responsibility in improving their situation. Key to their success was embracing their duality and mediating between Russia and Estonia – respecting both cultures, providing insight on perspectives and opinions of both sides and improving communication between the Russian and Estonian languages. But, analyzing the interviewees' responses, supported by historical observations, indicates that Russian-speaking Estonians are hesitant to operate on a more collective level to achieve this improvement and mediation on behalf of the entire Russian-speaking community. For example, interviewee #9 self-identified as an individual who has operated in-between the notion of Russian and Estonian since childhood, speaks Russian and Estonian fluently, and has claimed that *"we need more...people acting as bridges between the two countries."*<sup>203</sup>. But interviewee #9 did not consider herself to be capable of serving as such a bridge on a community level: *"I think I'm in the middle and I don't want to interfere.... But if I'm asked I would ...I would give my opinion...But I'm not active enough to be the bridge person."*<sup>204</sup> A final reference to Estonia's Bronze Soldier incident in 2007, an event considered by many a threat to the Russian-speaking community's culture and history in Estonia, is another telling example of this non-existent community mobilization within Ida-Virumaa. Olga Davydova analyzed the media coverage and activities against the move of the Bronze Soldier to identify the primary actors and their main reasons for opposing the removal of a soviet-era statue. She reported that,

Absent from this interpretation is the problematic situation of ethnically non-Estonian Russian speakers, whose push for equality with ethnic Estonian citizens during the creation of the Estonian nation could have been a very strong factor in the background of the protest against the removal of the monument (2008, 396).

Aside from general coverage in the media during the months immediately following the incident, after the Bronze Soldier was moved, little was heard from the Russian-speaking Estonians. An event, played out on an international stage and offering the greatest visibility to the community to voice its concerns, offer solutions and begin activating their duality for the region did not yield any formidable mobilization from the community. Or perhaps more accurately, the community's desire to improve their situation in relation to ethnic Estonians did

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<sup>203</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q7)

<sup>204</sup> (Interviewee #9, P4, Q7)

not drive them to unite and voice their opinions to the Estonian government or even turn to the Russian government for support in improving their situation.

This lack of community mobilization was particularly evident among the interviewees when answering the question, “Who do you think best understands or articulates Narva and Ida-Virumaa’s needs or issues?” (P4, Q8), where interviewees declared that change in Ida-Virumaa needed to be initiated by “*those of us from this region*” (*сами жители*), but at the same time, the interviewees had difficulty naming a specific person actually making those changes. The most frequently referenced names when asked to provide a name or organization that is actively working to address issues in Narva and Ida-Virumaa (P4, Q12) were the former and current University of Tartu Narva College directors, Katri Raik and Kristina Kallas respectively<sup>205</sup>. Both were praised for making significant efforts to draw attention to and improve the poor conditions of Ida-Virumaa – but neither were considered “*сами жители*”. Interviewee #5 stated, “*Katri Rake. This woman is absolutely Estonian. But she sincerely and wholeheartedly loves Narva and did a very great job here. It's like in the Middle Ages when the church went somewhere, it carried light and enlightenment. Similarly, Katri Rake [arrived here].*”<sup>206</sup> Kristina Kallas was similarly lauded but she was also seen as an outsider although she considers herself from a mixed Russian and Estonian family. Interviewee #9 stated plainly that, “*the people who, who have been here, doing the Estonian thing, so to say. To, to keeping the culture alive, are the ones who have come from Tartu or other parts of Estonia.*”<sup>207</sup> In total, very few individuals were identified as working on a communal level to improve Ida-Virumaa and the ones who were mentioned did not grow up in Ida-Virumaa, even though the interviewees’ themselves declared that only someone from within the community could best understand how to fix their unique issues. Armed with a better understanding of the people and their perceptions of belonging, we can now suggest two explanations for this lack of mobilization from within the community: an internal conflict between individual and collective identity orientation and an individual approach to resolving conflict between the in-group versus the outgroup.

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<sup>205</sup> The fact that a majority of the interviews were held on the Narva College campus and many of the respondents likely interacted with these two individuals is a significant factor in explaining why these two names were mentioned. However, these names are also well known throughout Estonia, particularly in politics, for their significant efforts to improve the conditions for the Russian-speaking Estonians in Ida-Virumaa.

<sup>206</sup> “Катри Райк. Это женщина абсолютно эстонская. Но которая искренне и всем сердцем любит именно Нарву и сделала здесь очень большую работу. Это как в свое время в Средневековье, когда куда-то приходила церковь, она несла за собой свет и просвещение. Точно так же и Катри Райк.” (Interviewee #5, P4, Q12)

<sup>207</sup> (Interviewee #5, P4, Q7)

### **Internal Identity Orientation**

As discussed earlier, using the four leading models in psychological identity formation, the Russian-speaking Estonians self-perceived identity lies somewhere between the individual “me” and collective “we”. Commonalities and characteristics tended to favor Estonians on a personal level but Russians on a collective level (particularly when the roles in which they are functioning are influenced by Russian family). Based on their relationship with Estonia, the interviewees described themselves as being proactive and orderly-focused as well as having a strong sense of individual responsibility to meet or exceed defined goals, thus suggesting that Russian-speaking Estonians may seek to change their environment or correct social injustices by taking an individual approach. Meanwhile, the collective “we” characteristics seen as being inherited from their relationship with Russia, were described as being more chaotic, creative, reactive (act, then think) and passive, particularly with regards to the soviet mentality where citizens would wait for the government to provide rather than act (reference interviewee #5’s comments on Russian mentality during section 2.3, “Opportunity and Individual Responsibility”<sup>208</sup>). The descriptions of these collective characteristics suggest that when Russian-speaking Estonians do operate as a group, their efforts, cooperation and approach will exhibit a more chaotic, unorganized and reactive nature, resembling a soviet-era community in need of top-down and external guidance to achieve collective goals. Perhaps for this reason, leadership from individuals outside the community like Katri Raik or Kristina Kallas have been successful. Moreover, since we have concluded that the interviewees demonstrated a greater belongingness to Estonia, and that the social distance between ethnic Estonians is continuously decreasing among younger Russian-speaking Estonians and ethnic Estonians, we can conclude that the actions of Russian-speaking Estonians will likely continue to focus on the individual level or the “I”/ “Me” level, with a lesser emphasis on collective orientation or unification.

### **Group Conflict Orientation**

Using Tajfel’s Social Identity theory, we can also suggest a second explanation for this lack of community mobilization. When discussing Tajfel’s theory we determined that the interviewees isolation from both Estonians and Russians as a result of discrimination and restricted social interaction causes the interviewees to view themselves as a unique ingroup, in opposition to the outgroups (ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians). Tajfel’s theory claims that this orientation often leads to conflict between the ingroup and outgroup, particularly when these outgroups are regarded as higher-status groups (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 115). As we

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<sup>208</sup> (Interviewee #5, Additional Comments, Lines 331-335)



have shown however, there is little mobilization from the Russian-speaking Estonians to compete against or challenge the outgroups. We would expect the Russian-speaking Estonians to challenge the higher-status group of Estonians in particular given the large amount of exclusion and injustice attributed to this outgroup discovered during the interviews. Ashmore and Jussim suggest however, that this group-level conflict orientation may not always result in a full community mobilization because individuals in the lower-group “who perceive differential group evaluations as legitimate and group boundaries as permeable may try to move into the higher-status group” (Ibid., 115). In this case, the theorists explain that community mobilization is avoided when two conditions are met. Firstly, members of the in-group (Russian-speaking Estonians) must agree that the division between them and the out-group is a legitimate one. In this research, interviewees expressed complete agreement that they were different from ethnic Estonians for a number of undeniable and natural reasons, most notably language and ethnicity. Secondly, the boundary between the ingroup and outgroup must be permeable, meaning the individual can transition from one group to another through self-adaptation. Interviewees highlighted that on an individual level, when Russian-speaking Estonians choose to learn Estonian and integrate, then they are accepted (albeit slowly at times) into the larger Estonian society. Reviewing the many examples provided in this research, we can conclude that the focus on individual responsibility to meet the requirements for better integration highlights this approach as the most prevalent among the interviewees and likely among many of the Russian-Speaking Estonians of Ida-Virumaa.

Ashmore and Jussim thus suggest that we can only expect to observe a community level mobilization among the Russian-speaking Estonians when group boundaries are perceived as illegitimate and impermeable. They argue that in this case,

collective strategies come into play, with group members jointly seeking (1) to change the evaluation of the comparison criterion, (2) to make a different positive and distinctive criterion salient, or (3) to shift comparisons to a different out-group (Ibid., 115).

Within Ida-Virumaa, the group boundaries of economic opportunities, job-market equality, and equal education opportunities in ones’ own native language were perceived as illegitimate boundaries between the Russian-speaking Estonians and ethnic Estonians. Here again however, the interviewees indicated that the boundaries were not impermeable: the harder an individual worked to improve their Estonian language, the more equal their wages and opportunities in higher education. Therefore, the perception given by the interviewees is that individual actions

can overcome the unjust boundaries separating Russian-speaking Estonians from ethnic Estonians, therefore there is again no need to mobilize on a community level.

Interviewees' descriptions of change within the community, particularly from the younger generation, however indicate that there may also be an associated change to group mobilization occurring. The interviews suggested that the generational change within the community is yielding members that are more focused on embracing their duality and defining themselves and the community as being in a position of opportunity to serve as a mediator between Russia and Estonia. It is here we find support for Ashmore and Jussim's final corollary on group mobilization which occurs "when boundaries appear to be illegitimate but changeable" at which point, the Russian-speaking Estonians could mobilize to "challenge the hierarchical structure itself, initiating direct social competition with the higher-status group" (Ibid., 115). In essence, through embracing their duality, they can raise the importance and value of their ingroup to challenge the inequalities previously encountered as a "non-integrated Russian-speaking Estonian from Ida-Virumaa". Quoting Thoits and Virshup, Ashmore and Jussim explain that,

[E]ach individual usually adds their own unique style and flourishes to societally prescribed roles and to their identifications with collectivities. When enough people change how they enact a role, the personal can change the social structure. For example, the dramatic increase in the number of working women over the last 30 years has fundamentally changed how many Americans think about women's roles, even though whether to work is primarily an individual-level, personal decision (1997, 224).

Therefore, the future of community mobilization for the Russian-speaking Estonians seems to be one of opportunity and hope. If Russian-speaking Estonians continue to embrace their duality and the community focuses on capitalizing on their uniqueness as a "bridge" between two societies and cultures we can expect to see a community that may no longer need external leadership to generate change in the face of social exclusion and discrimination.

#### **4.2. Other Means to Identify Self-perception, Belongingness and Mobilization**

Researcher and ethnographer Henry Mainsah suggests that the virtual world of social media and the Internet, may offer communities that are negotiating between two cultures a space to address the conflict between in and out groups. Indeed, statistical research completed by different organizations indicates that the use of the Internet and social media continues to rise worldwide, particularly within Europe and the United States (Perrin 2015, Kotzeva 2017), adding validity to the increased role and importance of virtual space.

This aspect of virtual space however, only briefly surfaced during the interviews in response to Part 4, Question 9, “Do you feel that there are appropriate channels through which you can voice unique concerns to the Estonian government about matters that pertain to your quality of life?”. Interviewee #2 stated,

*“We have only one app. And we can ... report on the problems such as, ‘Here we have a hole in the asphalt.’ ‘Here we have garbage can knocked over.’ And that’s all. We cannot talk about life. [...it is an] app [called] ‘Let me know’. You do not have this? We have it. That is, we go online and say - there is a hole. And they can fix this hole.”<sup>209</sup>*

The increased importance that the internet and social media play within society today may be the reason that the Estonian government created the web-based application “Let me Know” (*Anna Teada* in Estonian), in an effort to offer a modern way for individuals to identify issues and express dissatisfaction directly to the Estonian government. According to the description found on the Google Play website where the application can be downloaded, this app “enables you to notify municipalities of problems that you have found, such as a garbage heap, an open well, a streetlamp out of order, a hole in the street etc.” (2018, 1). As Interviewee #2 stated, it only handles concrete issues and does not serve as a place of discourse about life. The lack of reference to the site coupled with the skepticism of the site’s usefulness for resolving societal issues, we can conclude that this virtual space is relatively ineffective as a place to discuss the social issues identified by the community in this research. Mainsah’s research argues that it is not just any space that contributes to community unity and self-exploration, rather it is the virtual space created by the minority community itself that plays a vital role in identity formation and belongingness.

The Article “Young African Norwegian women and diaspora: Negotiating identity and community through digital social networks” by Henry Mainsah describes research conducted to analyze how the virtual space, and its intersection with the physical space, may serve as a new medium through which minority communities can unite to express their uniqueness as individuals who live between two cultures. Henry Mainsah’s study provides some of the initial research into how the current environment of mass migration, changing political borders, and increased globalization have created the conditions for minority communities to come together online to interact:

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<sup>209</sup> “We have only one app. And we can ... сообщить о проблемах таких. Вот здесь у нас яма в асфальте. Здесь у нас мусор может быть разбросан. И все. О жизни мы не можем. [...это] апп. «Дай знать». У вас такого нет? А у нас есть. То есть мы заходим в интернет и говорим – тут яма. И они могут это ну как бы заделать эту яму.” (Interviewee #2, P4, Q9).

Digital and online media such as social network sites, blogs, online communities, role-playing games and media sharing sites – where people can create, publish and share media content – have increasingly become part of the media ecology of our societies. These media are altering the landscape of representation by providing new spaces and new tools for users to produce a public presence and by providing opportunities for public communication (2014, 106).

Citing previous researchers (Daniels 2013; Nakamura and Chow-White 2011; Parker and Song 2009), Mainsah argues that, “The prevailing view among scholars is that the Internet is a site for identity construction and community formation around racial and ethnic identity” (2014, 107). With this hypothesis, Mainsah uses two in-depth interviews with Madi and Naima to discuss how members of the African community living in Norway navigate between identity and belongingness associated with their country of residence, Norway and their location of ethnic origin, Africa (specifically Congo and Nigeria). Mainsah’s research concluded that the online space allowed the interviewees to feel comfortable and safe in expressing their uniqueness, offered an ability to interact with the larger minority community despite physical separation and allowed the community to challenge the validity of discourses generated by the larger society. Similar to the experiences of Madi and Naima, members of the Russian-speaking community of Narva are likely able to capitalize on the virtual space social media and the Internet afford a community searching to express itself, particularly regarding the uniqueness of existing between two cultures.

Mainsah’s first interviewee, Madi, explained that the use of Facebook created “a safe black space [...] to find a place where we could share black thought, love, life, sharing experiences [and] to witness” (Mainsah 2014, 111). Russian-speaking Estonians provided multiple examples where their surrounding environment was one that promoted exclusion (places within Estonia outside of Ida-Virumaa) and discomfort (travels within Russia). An online community offers Russian-speaking Estonians the ability to converse in their native tongue with other Russian-speakers in other areas of Estonia, without activating sentiments of discrimination or exclusion from ethnic Estonians. Similarly, the community would be able to interact with ethnic Russians in Russia without incurring the described feelings of uncomfortableness discussed in Section 3.2. “Place Belongingness” when physically traveling to Russia.

Social media was also described in Mainsah’s study as a place “for connecting with a wider global network of communities of affect and interest” (Mainsah 2014, 111). The opportunity to connect with a wider network in the case of the Russian-speaking Estonians is

twofold: increased interaction with other Russian-speakers within Estonia and interaction with other Russian-speaking communities living outside of Russia. While Section 2.2 of this research (“Institutional Connections”) showed that the interviewees exhibited limited feelings of similarity with the Russian-speaking community in Georgia, Mainsah suggests that online spaces may allow differing communities to connect and develop a relationship in accordance with Gajjala’s (2010) concept of ‘contact zone’: a social space in which ‘peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations’ (Pratt 1992: 6 as cited in Mainsah 2014, 112). The extension of the community network to other Russian-speakers outside of Estonia may encourage unity based on cognitive alignment between the Russian-speaking Estonians and the larger Russian-speaking community to which they ascribe -Turner’s Social Identity theory - (Ashmore and Jussim 1997, 118) based on the commonality of duality discovered by Kallas (2016) and Cheskin (2013) in Estonia and Latvia respectively.

The virtual spaces created by Russian-speaking Estonians also allows ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians to engage in the discourses they promote or support. Drawing a comparison to discourses surrounding black identity, Mainsah explains how the internet opens the discourse to those who do not necessarily consider themselves a member of the minority community, but their interaction facilitates the process of identity formation and belongingness:

the Internet functions as a kind of space that encourages intimate discursive interaction, similar to the way Black barber shops and beauty salons in the US allowed spaces for identity discourses between Black men and women, and also opens these formerly private spaces to non-Blacks who contribute to the articulation of black identity online (Mainsah 2014, 107).

The extension of the discourses about the Russian-speakers’ self-perception and belongingness to the virtual space gives voice to these discourses within the larger Estonian and Russian societies. This not only offers the Russian-speaking community a position of strength from which to express themselves, but it also encourages interaction between the societies which can serve to remove misconceptions and stereotypes.

Finally, Mainsah’s ethnography suggests that online spaces offer the opportunity to question majority-generated discourses. He provides an anecdote from Naima’s experiences of posting comments that challenged the mainstream “anti-racist discourses” within Norwegian society. Mainsah suggests that “[t]he quotes, videos and other images on Naima’s profiles on Facebook and on Tumblr form a sort of bricolage of cultural signs that in this context become useful as ‘diasporic resources’ (Brown 1998) for making statements about identity” (Mainsah 2014, 115). As Russian-speaking Estonians search for ways to increase the value of their

duality and counter the afore mentioned stereotypes – Ida-Virumaa is unsafe or Russian-speaking Estonians are unwilling to learn Estonian – online discourses can be shaped to support these efforts and counter exclusionary discourses.

While Mainsah's study concludes that online space can unite a community, give it voice and perhaps help the community mobilize, the study also indicates that the ability to transcend physical and political borders through online communities could introduce exposure to more radical minority communities around the world: "[Madi's] 'routings' stretched to include not just peoples of African ancestry but also racialized minorities around the world" (Mainsah 2014, 112). The introduction of other influences on the Russian-speaking community of Ida-Virumaa aside from the Russian and Estonian societies analyzed during this study has the potential to significantly alter the self-perception of the Russian-speaking Estonians and their sense of belongingness, perhaps changing the dynamics of the community's approach to mobilization. The combination of the rising trend in internet use and the generational preference among Russian-speaking Estonians to seek to embrace their duality and raise the value of Russian-speaking Estonians vis-à-vis Estonia and Russia suggest that future studies aimed at identifying how, in what way and through what means the Russian-speaking Estonian community may be mobilizing should seriously consider analyzing the digital aspects of the community members' lives.

#### **4.3. How Might Estonia and Russia Interpret this Research?**

This research deliberately focuses on the Russian-speaking Estonian's perspective in an effort to provide greater understanding to a perspective that has received little attention until recently. The primary intent of this research is to offer perceptions and conclusions that can be used to better understand the greater environment within which the Russian-speaking Estonians exist, that is, Estonian and Russian relations. Both countries have harbored concerns about how the community perceives their environment and enacted policies based on broad assumptions or economic-focused statistics which do not capture Russian-speaking Estonians' perceptions, desires and allegiances. But this research has shed light on some of these fears and revealed that perhaps both countries should reevaluate their understanding of the Russian-speaking Estonians. Equipped with a better understanding of the community's perspectives and self-assessments, the discoveries of this research provide a new starting point for evaluating how the two countries might analyze and alter their roles in influencing the community's self-identification and sense of belongingness. This would be particularly advantageous at the national level since, as noted at the beginning of this research, both countries have recognized

the validity of the complex interdependence theory and consequently the role that the Russian-speaking Estonian community plays in countries' larger national objectives.

### **Key Take-away Points for Russia and Estonia**

Among the many topics presented by the interviewees, education is one that offers opportunities for both countries. Interviewees indicated a desire to continue advanced level education where the primary language of instruction is Russian. Although Estonia continues to strengthen the position of the Estonian language in an effort to protect a language and a population that are significantly smaller in relation to its Russian neighbor, there is an advantage to establishing and offering a higher education university taught in Russian. Estonia has the necessary linguistic infrastructure, cultural knowledge, and demand for such an endeavor. Most importantly, such a venture would place Estonia on the world map as the leading Russian-language university in Europe, based on a European structure and with the corresponding European accreditation system. In other words, this university would be an attractive destination for other Russian-language focused students worldwide searching to deepen their knowledge and use of the Russian language but cannot, will not or prefer not to travel to Russia for a multitude of reasons including unfamiliarity with the country or home-country restrictions. Tying entry requirements into such a Russian University program to proficiency in a second language based on citizenship could help combat Estonian fears of reverting back to an either Russian or Estonian approach to education within its society (Estonian citizens must demonstrate a high proficiency in the Estonian language while international students must have a high proficiency in English for example).

Likewise, higher education in the Russian language provides an opportunity for Russia to not only strengthen relations with Russian-speaking Estonians but also address a separate “brain-drain” dilemma within Russia.<sup>210</sup> Offering advanced degree opportunities in Russia for Russian-speaking Estonians (or all Russian-speakers that are citizens of former soviet states) could introduce young talent into Russia and establish a means by which these Russian-speakers become familiar with Russia and its people, dispelling the fears and unfamiliarity that many of the interviewees in this research cited as discomforting when traveling to Russia. Moreover, if efforts are made to make the study program advantageous (less red tape, cost efficient student visas, scholarships based on high-priority fields of employment) Russia has the opportunity to tie such an education initiative in Russia with its repatriation policy. With

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<sup>210</sup> For more on the Russian “brain-drain” issue, see Timmothy Heleniak’s “Migration Dilemmas Haunt Post-Soviet Russia”. *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*. 2002 and The International Organization for Migration’s *Migration Trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: 2001-2002 Review*.

this approach, Russia could begin to address its well-known negative demographic dilemma within society and the labor force – an original objective of the repatriation policy, which ultimately failed because it was unable to attract former soviet citizens and their families away from a prospective future in Europe.<sup>211</sup> If Russian-speaking Estonians become familiar with the Russian education system, live in Russia during their studies, and perhaps even find employment opportunities upon graduation within Russia, this policy could generate renewed interest in repatriation to Russia. As cited in this research, this type of exchange between Russia and Russian-speaking Estonians would also meet many other concerns referenced by the interviewees: better cross-border relations, increased interaction with ethnic Russians and more opportunities to use their native tongue for future job employment.

Culture is another avenue by which Russia and Estonia can address the Russian-speaking Estonians' desire for greater inclusion through entertainment and activities within Ida-Virumaa. For Estonia, some of the interviewees indicated that this is already in the beginning stages with the introduction of marathons or the arrangement of concerts and functions at the Narva College, thereby introducing Estonians from other regions to Ida-Virumaa, dispelling stereotypes about who the Russian-speaking Estonians are and increasing the interaction between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speaking Estonians<sup>212</sup>. Russia's *Russkiy Mir* program however, is also positioned to capitalize on the community's cultural needs. Money allocated from Russia in support of these cultural outreach programs could seek to encourage sponsoring and hosting events that attract those that are not of Russian ethnicity within Estonia to the Ida-Virumaa region to promote the exchange of culture and understanding between Russians and Estonians. Russia could also seek to bring cultural entertainment from Russia to Estonia that resonates with Russian-speaking Estonians, particularly those in the younger generations or create cultural visas that are economically smart to encourage those from Ida-Virumaa to travel to Russia for cultural events in neighboring towns and cities. These efforts would bolster the interaction between ethnic Russians and Russian-speaking Estonians, particularly among those who have had little to no personal contact with Russia directly.

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<sup>211</sup> For more on Russia's negative demographics issue, see "Russia Beckons, But Diaspora Wary". *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute* (2002) by Timmothy Heleniak; The International Organization for Migration's *Migration Trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia: 2001-2002 Review*; "Population mobility in the Commonwealth of independent states: Whither common migration policy?" CARIM-East research report, *CMR Working Papers, No. 74/132* (2014) and "Russia: A Migration System with Soviet Roots." *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute* (2017) by Olga Chudinovskikh and Mikhail Denisenko; and "The State Program for Assistance to the Voluntary Resettlement of Compatriots Living Abroad to the Russian Federation" (2006) at <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/16483>.

<sup>212</sup> (Interviewee #9 answering P4, Q7 and Interviewee #3 answering P4, Q7)



As a final recommendation, both countries should be sensitive to the uniqueness and duality of the Russian-speaking Estonians. The terms “Russian” and “Compatriot” have multiple connotations and are not received by all of the Russian-speaking Estonian community in a way that promotes cohesiveness or inclusion. Whether in national policies, media broadcasts, or cultural outreaches, both countries should be aware of the discourse that surrounds the terms used to describe this community. Given the low resonance with the interviewees in this research and the lack of inter-identification between the various Russian-speaking communities in the PSS, Russia in particular should consider addressing the uniqueness of each community within the broader compatriot policy. Without this specification and compounded by the weakening of ties caused by cross-border restrictions, dying family members in Russia, and a strengthening of belongingness with a host country, Russia can only expect the term “compatriot” to become less and less effective.

The solutions available to both countries require a change to their current approaches. Both countries must first understand what the Russian-speaking community wants and how it perceives inclusion and exclusion before these opportunities become available. Despite present perspectives on social distance and belongingness, the country which seeks to understand the community better will be better positioned to positively influence the community and shape future perceptions and relations.

### **Is the Minority a Threat?**

In addition to spotting opportunities for both governments, this research also challenges popular perceptions about the Russian-speaking community used in Estonian and Russian national discourse: 1) claims that Russian-speaking Estonians identify as compatriots of Russia who desire support from Russia to protect them from Estonian discrimination and 2) claims that Russian-speaking Estonians pose a threat to Estonia’s internal security because those concentrated along the border with Russia would be agreeable to rejoining Russia. As a clear counter to these claims, the interviewees indicated that any blanket categorizing term to encompass the community did not account for their uniqueness and complexity and failed to accurately describe how the interviewees viewed themselves and the larger Russian-speaking community in Estonia. This applied to the term “*соотечественников*” (used primarily from the Russian perspective) as well as the stand-alone descriptor of “Russian” (used by Ethnic Estonians to describe all Russian-speakers in Estonia regardless of their ethnic origins). As Kristina Kallas explained during the *Deep Baltic* panel discussion, the use of all-encompassing terms is likely a result of former soviet practices where the Soviet Union, composed of numerous sub-ethnicities and cultures, had to find a way to unite the population. “It’s easier to

put it [ethnicity] into one picture than seventeen different pictures” (2017, 21). In addition to being too broad and non-descriptive, the term compatriot specifically evoked no real sense of connection from the interviewees. This disassociation made it difficult for the interviewees to relate to the actions done by the Russian government for said “*соотечественников*”. On a separate note, even if the interviewees had felt that the term compatriot referred to them, their perception about how to handle Estonian discrimination did not reference greater support from Russia. Instead, the interviewees stressed how the Russian-speaking community or the Estonian government could improve the situation, not Russia. This significantly weakens claims that Russia can act in defense of the Russian-speaking community when said community does not seek, desire or consider necessary Russia’s help.

As far as fears for Estonia’s internal security, there were only two references to the compatriot act and its associated repatriation policy. Interviewee #12 said: *“Now it is said that they want to offer citizenship or a residence permit to all those who were born in Russia. But even if something is done, it is rare. But maybe it's just that I'm not informed”*<sup>213</sup> and interviewee #14 said: *“I know that there are special programs, programs to support compatriots. And there are different integration courses there. But how, to make it affect my life, I do not know, I find it difficult to answer.”*<sup>214</sup> If the lack of references is not enough to highlight this disassociation, interviewees #12 and #14 also support their mention of the policies with comments underlining their inapplicability. The weak connection with these policies suggest one or a combination of the following reasons: a lack of information reaching the audience, lack of its applicability to the Russian-speakers of Narva, or a complete disinterest in the subject - meaning perhaps that it is not seen as any sort of improvement in their life. In all of these cases, Estonia’s fear that Russian-speaking Estonians seek to rejoin Russia seems to be no longer valid. The interviewees make it clear that although there is still an appreciation for Russia’s efforts to protect their language, culture and history from persecution, it would be an exaggeration to claim that the community collectively desires to return to Russia. This conclusion supports Kristina Kallas’ findings discussed in her article published in Volume 15 of the *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* in which

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<sup>213</sup> “Сейчас говорится о том, что хотят предложить гражданство или вид на жительство всем, кто родился в России. Но даже если что-то делается, то редко. Но возможно, это потому просто, что я не информирована.” (Interviewee #12, P3, Q1c)

<sup>214</sup> “я знаю, что есть специальные программы, программы поддержки соотечественников. И разные там интеграционные курсы. Но как, чтобы оно повлияло именно на жизнь, я не знаю, я затрудняюсь ответить.” (Interviewee #14, P3, Q1c)

she referenced a statement made by the leader of the Russian-language media in Estonia during an interview on August 25, 2015:

The younger generation has developed strong territorial and partially political identification with Estonia and ‘their [more positive] attitude and trust towards the Estonian state determines how they see the compatriot movement [as something not for them]’ (2016, 10).

In a separate discussion, Kallas also stated that, “Identification with the body of compatriots is ambiguous due to the low resonance that Russia’s compatriot policy has among Estonian Russians” (2016, 17). Perhaps this is best summarized by interviewee #5 when commenting on how residents of Narva and Ida-Virumaa might react if they woke up and found themselves under the government of Russia: *“I don’t believe that people here really want to be added, I don’t believe that.... Because we already know how it is to live in Europe. To have European basics.”*<sup>215</sup>

### **How Can Governments Affect Belongingness?**

If this research has revealed that both Estonia and Russia lack a full understanding of the Russian-speaking Estonians’ perceptions and consequently have created policies that do not motivate the community in the way intended or are missing opportunities to maximize the community’s potential, then it would be advantageous for the governments to assess how to fix these shortcomings. Specifically, the governments should compare the perceptions presented by the interviewees in this research with the perceptions upon which their national policies were based and determine how well they align. If there are large discrepancies, how might they reevaluate their policies and identify where they can make corrections to terminology, focus or intent to more effectively relate with the Russian-speaking community?

One recommendation is to use the material and conclusions presented in this research coupled with the application of Baumeister and Leary’s theory of belongingness to analyze the effectiveness of current strategies and policies aimed at the Russian-speaking Estonians. Baumeister and Leary’s theory of belongingness is described as consisting of two parts:

First, people need frequent personal contacts or interactions with the other person. Ideally, these interactions would be affectively positive or pleasant, but it is mainly important that the majority be free from conflict and negative affect. Second, people need to perceive that there is an interpersonal bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future. This aspect provides a relational context to one’s interactions with the other person, and so the perception of the bond is essential for satisfying the need to belong.... To satisfy the need to belong, the person must

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<sup>215</sup> (Interviewee #5, Additional Comments, Lines 400-402)

believe that the other cares about his or her welfare and likes (or loves) him or her (1995, 500).

Future research should extend Baumeister and Leary's theory of individual belongingness to a social level – evaluating the Russian-speaking community as a whole – and then evaluate whether Russia or Estonia offers the community a promising stable future relationship. In this research, we concluded that Russian-speaking Estonians have a “frequent and personal” relationship with both Estonia (physically, socially, mentally) and Russia (culturally, historically, linguistically), and that despite certain areas of isolation from Estonia (caused by discrimination, native language, and economic conditions) and from Russia (caused by physical separation and cross border restrictions) Russian-speaking Estonians maintain a constant interaction with both countries that they described as generally positive, particularly with regards to the opportunities their unique in-between status offers. Thus, this research has already determined that Russian-speaking Estonians meet the first criteria in Baumeister and Leary's “Need to Belong” theory.

Using Marco Antonsich's criteria for belongingness, we identified three primary discourses used among the interviewees when discussing their perception of socio-spatial inclusion: 1) Education, particularly with regards to the Estonian and Russian languages, 2) the environment of Ida-Virumaa and 3) the physical exposure to ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians. We determined that the frequency with which these topics were referenced and their criticality in determining inclusion or exclusion also made them the most valuable discourses in understanding the Russian-speaking Estonians' self-perceptions and sense of belongingness. Using this research as a reference, one can evaluate the nationally generated discourses on belongingness within Russia and Estonia and analyze 1) if the national discourses address one of the three primary areas presented by the interviewees and 2) if the focus and intent of the national discourses promote greater inclusion or exclusion. When mutuality between the discourses of one of the countries and the Russian-speaking community exists, then according to Baumeister and Leary's theory one can claim that the reciprocal feeling of care about the community's welfare will foster a greater sense of belongingness within the Russian-speaking community. It is through such a discourse analysis that the governments can assess if the goals and objectives set forth in their national strategies and policies will successfully resonate with the Russian-speaking Estonian community. For Estonia's Integrating Estonia 2020 Strategy, the desired end-state is “that Estonian society is integrated and socially cohesive; people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds actively participate in society and share democratic values” (2014, 14). If the discourses within this national strategy do not align with

the Russian-speaking Estonians discourses however, Estonia may continue to face significant issues with integration. Similarly, Russia should reevaluate if the compatriot policy or the three pillars of the “original ideological construct of *Russkiy Mir* [...] Russian language; common historical memory that strongly focuses on Soviet victory over Nazism in WWII; and the Russian Orthodox Church” as summarized by Kristina Kallas, still resonate with the intended audience (2016, 7). If not, the Russian government should align the discourses within these documents (and strongly consider better defining what a “compatriot” means today), in order to better influence the Russian-speaking Estonian community. These future studies would allow researchers to determine what aspects of Russia and Estonia’s national policies are influencing the social distance between their society and the Russian-Speaking Estonians, and consequently better shape and influence their socio-spatial inclusion.

### **Military Applicability**

As a final recommendation, it is important to emphasize that although this nature was one of research and academically based, the discoveries and conclusions have an impact on not only the political but also military understanding of the border environments and intercultural encounters. One could argue that the claim of a mobilizing minority community (whether in support of Estonia or Russia) is enough to create the perception of a threat or contribute to a fear, upon which both countries generate policy in defense of such a fear. This research, however is intended to demonstrate that an active and in-depth research into the self-perception of the community and an understanding of their true desires, goals and sense of belongingness may reveal previously unconsidered solutions to border conflicts and foreign policy and reduce international tensions between two countries.

Absent within the large amounts of military publication discussing options to confront what is perceived as increased levels of Russian aggression towards NATO, Europe and the collective West is a focus on the human dimension. The closest reference to this area of influence is unconventional warfare and the use of “nontraditional” military means to achieve an objective. This research on Russian-speaking Estonians reveals, that there is a powerful potential within a country that has a large Russian-speaking minority that should be better understood to help not only calculate a country’s subversive potential but also to perhaps counter the mobilization of said minority in support of unconventional Russian military efforts. This research has shown that a Russian-speaking community can be a supportive effort for the non-Russian nation when that country can develop and encourage inclusion. This community, when supporting the “host nation” can counter unconventional methods such as the deployment of “little green men” if these clandestine (or covert?) Russians cannot use the community to

blend in or raise support within the community because the community does not support their efforts. Conversely, Russia or another nation similarly interested in mobilizing a community outside its borders, can convert this “desire to belong” into military potential to widen the social distance between the minority community and the host country. Currently, it appears that if militarily these are the perspectives of Russia and Estonia, that Estonia has the upper hand. However, this research has also shown that these perceptions and sense of belongingness are constantly in flux and both countries have the opportunity to alter their military advantage through a better understanding of the Russian-speaking minority.

Most importantly, this research also underlines the growing importance on the Russian-speaking Estonian community and their recognition of their importance with regards to their duality. Returning to the concept of complex interdependence, the populations greater sense of belongingness to Estonia allows the diaspora a sense of independence from Russia. Conversely, Russia’s need for the use of the diaspora as a means to exert dominance within its perceived spheres of influence actually places a considerable amount of power in the hands of the diaspora. PhD Scholar Waheeda Rana quotes Keohane and Nye (1977), explaining that “It is asymmetries in dependence that are most likely to provide sources of influence for actors in their dealings with one another. Less dependent actors can often use the interdependence relationship as a source of power in bargaining over an issue and perhaps to affect other issues.” (Rana 2015, 291). The role of the Russian-speaking Estonian does not depend only on the discourses formed by Estonia or Russia – with time, perhaps the bridge that the Russian-speaking Estonians are creating will also be controlled by the Russian-speaking Estonians who will be the primary influencers on how communication flows between Estonia and Russia.

However, if nothing else is taken from this research, then both governments should at least value the self-recognized duality of the Russian-speaking Estonian. The opportunities that this uniquely qualified community possess as a result of their combination of Estonian and Russian influences is advantageous to all three interested parties. As the interviewees stated, they can be the bridge between the two countries moving forward to help provide clearer communication, as well as offering solutions that are mutually beneficial since both sides of the border are of value to the Russian-speaking Estonians. Choosing to ignore such a unique talent that has taken 26 years to develop would be a disadvantage to all. Estonia is often regarded as the shining example of a Post-Soviet country transitioning to a market economy and joining the European Union as a quickly recovered and advancing nation. Once again, the country is positioned to stand apart from others and demonstrate a refined way of capitalizing on the nuances of intercultural encounters to improve border relations and successfully

integrate a diverse and complex society. In an environment where large-scale migration is becoming commonplace, other countries could benefit from having a role model like Estonia.

## **Section 5. Conclusion**

Referencing Estonia or the Russian-speaking community as a role model is not the only application of this research to a broader context. The various discoveries on cross-cultural identity formation, duality, belongingness and mobilization are a few of the many issues discussed that are present in other areas of the world where two cultures have come into contact and changed individuals' self-perception and their perspective on the surrounding environment. Of course, not all aspects will apply in other situations. In fact, extending the conclusions of this research to the broader PSS revealed that the interviewees did not identify with other Russian-speaking communities, suggesting that context plays a critical role in their self-perceptions and perspectives.

### **5.1 Can this be Applied to a Larger Context?**

During this research, we compared conclusions and discoveries with previous studies in Estonia and Latvia and identified some similarities between separate and distinct Russian-speaking communities. Most notably, the communities exhibited some level of duality and complexity in relation to their host country and Russia. But determining the scale of belongingness or the most critical discourses on socio-spatial inclusion for the other communities could not be deduced from this research. Applying Tajfel's theory one could make the argument that the similarities between the various Russian-speaking communities (loss of their Soviet identity, combatting ethnic discrimination, bilingualism) would unite the greater Russian-speaking community as one large ingroup in opposition to the various surrounding outgroups (Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Kazakhstan etc.). However, the interviewees indicated that there is little perceived connection between the Russian-speaking Estonians and other Russian-speaking communities in the PSS, let alone a unified ingroup-mobilization of Russian-speakers. Pal Kolsto, from the University of Oslo, references leading researcher of Russian-speaking communities, Igor Zevelev, to explain that Estonia is not a unique case. "[A] characteristic trait of the Russian diasporas is their fragmentation and weak mobilization. There are no noticeable horizontal links between them.... They do not have a common enemy or common dreams for the future" (Zevelev, 2008, p.6 as cited in Kolsto 2011, 157). The interviewees' low connection with other Russian-speaking communities in the PSS was most

evident when responding to Question 2, Part 3 concerning the transaction between Russia and Georgia. Their responses suggested that their affiliation with the Russian-speaking Georgians is based on factual reasoning – what they observed in news reports of the incident - not affiliation with a social group based on linguistic or historic similarities. (see Section 2.2 “Institutional Connections”) This unwillingness to relate to other Russian-speaking communities outside of Russia was interesting given the explicit descriptions of unity, familiarity, and connection attributed to the larger Russian-speaking community through language (Section 2.2 “Cultural Roots”). It appears, however that the uniqueness of the Estonian environment and the associated Estonian characteristics, history and culture cause the Russian-speaking Estonians to define their ingroup more narrowly, thus inhibiting a connection or cooperation between other Russian-speaking communities.

This conclusion offers an answer to one of the initial questions at the beginning of this research. Assuming that the mobilization observed within Crimea in 2014 accurately reflected desires of the Ukrainian-based Russian-speaking community, we asked if other countries with a Russian-speaking community should expect similar mobilization? This research has shown that at least as far as Estonia is concerned, there is a low correlation between other Russian-speaking communities and the Estonian one. Adding the numerous contextually influential factors, we can conclude that each Russian-speaking community not only has a unique self-perception and sense of belongingness, but the motivating factors to mobilize will also be unique. Although this declaration seems rather benign and logical, it is important to underline this conclusion in light of the recent concern that somehow these dispersed communities within the PSS (and at times even those located in countries that were never a part of the Soviet Union) are uniting and offering Russia a community willing to overthrow their host nations to (re)join Russia. As the Asymmetric Operations Working Group (AOWG) explained, the Baltic States are not Northeast European Versions of Crimea:

[I]t must be recognized from the outset that each of the Baltic States stands in a different position than Crimea prior to its annexation....Baltic territory does not hold similar historical, cultural, or spiritual importance as Crimea specifically, or Ukraine generally. Those interviewed in the Baltic States emphasized that Russians have always viewed Crimea as part of Russia, but they have not viewed the Baltic States in the same way. Additionally, as Figure 1 [Comparison of GDP Per Capita PPP of the Baltic States, Russia, and Ukraine] illustrates, residents of Ukraine increased their standard of living by joining Russia, whereas residents of the Baltic States do not stand to gain in living standard or services by becoming part of Russia. As a number of formal and informal interviewees communicated, unlike in Crimea, Russians living in the Baltic States enjoy the best of both worlds: they can embrace their Russian



culture and enjoy the government services of an EU member country (AOWG 2015, 4-5).

The context, environment, role of the host nation and the community's own self-perception must be accounted for when questioning the mobilization of the community.

In a similar effort to draw correlations to other Russian-speaking communities, researchers, military experts and politicians have even questioned if the Russian-speaking community within Finland possesses similar potential to mobilize in favor of Russia. Again, we are faced with different circumstances. Although Finland was ruled by Imperial Russia 100 years ago, Finland was never a part of the Soviet Union, so Russian-speakers who lived in Finland when the Soviet Union collapsed did not experience the overnight majority to minority shift described earlier as having a significant effect on the Russian-speakers' self-perception. Secondly, the movement of Russian-speakers into Finland did not result in large, industrial towns along Finland's border, which significantly affected the ratio of Russian-speakers to Ethnic Finns. It is difficult to find a comparable city within Finland that has such a high percentage of Russian-speakers to ethnic Finns, drastically contrasting to the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion observed in Estonia. In short, while concepts of identity, belongingness and mobilization from this research are transferable, the context must be taken into consideration whether it concerns Russian-speaking communities within the PSS or other ethnic minorities residing within the borders of a dissimilar society.

This research offers a method to discover the potential for mobilization and the motivations for such a mobilization, but conclusions about the Russian-speaking Estonians' potential to mobilize should not be used as indicative of other communities' potential. This means that countries should also not extrapolate the political actions of border and minority communities to develop their own country specific policies without thoroughly analyzing their specific minority and border communities.

## **5.2 Transnationalism**

Similar to the above question concerning the use of this study to understand the PSS, is the question of whether this situation can help understand similar cross-cultural interactions and border conflicts around the world. Although it is more traditional to only consider the national powers, particularly when it comes to large countries such as Russia given the size of the country and its military apparatus, this research of the Russian-speaking Estonians aims to impress upon the reader the growing importance of the complex-interdependence theory (Rana 2015) and the role that non-state actors such as a community of Russian-speaking Estonians

can play on an international or global stage. While they can be viewed as a liability to national unity, this research has shown that they can also be a bridging force, linking two different cultures and fostering integration and inclusion when they are understood. While the conclusions specific to the Russian-speaking Estonians may not be applicable world-wide, this method for understanding and interpreting a community that is as complex as the Russian-speaking Estonians can yield similar understanding in other intercultural relations and provide solutions to cross-border conflicts and intercultural misunderstandings. Therefore, in conclusion, this research aims to bring more attention to the need for studying transnationalism.

The term transnationalism was initially brought into use in the late 1990s/early 2000s, but the concepts and fields of study from which transnationalism developed are not new. In the book *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods* editor Rainer Bauböck explains that:

[T]ransnationalism has had a strong career as a concept in quite disparate fields of academic study. Probably the three most important ones are the following: first, international relations, where the concept began to be used as early as the 1970s to refer to the growing importance of non-state actors, such as multinational corporations and international NGOs, in the international arena (e.g. Keohane & Nye 1972); second, social movement studies, which were interested in political mobilisation across borders (e.g. Smith, Chatfield & Pagnucco 1997); and third, migration studies (e.g. Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1994) (Bauböck and Faist 2010, 296).

Similar to the conclusions drawn in *Diaspora and Transnationalism*, this research has concluded that the study of the Russian-speaking community transcends all of the above-mentioned fields of study and requires the incorporation of all of them to fully understand the potential the community possesses. This research has demonstrated the overlap of immigration, cross-border relations, cross-cultural encounters and cultural identification which all have an impact on how a community forms and develops. In the concluding chapter of the book, editor Rainer Bauböck states:

Although these are quite different fields, there was a common underlying perception that transnationalism was about ‘globalisation from below’ (Guarnizo & Smith 1998; Della Porta, Andretta, Mosca & Reiter 2006). Transnational relations were accordingly distinguished from international ones by insisting that at least one of the actors involved in the former be a non-state entity (Risse-Kappen 1995; Portes, Guarniz & Landolt 1999). Much of the empirical research on transnationalism has accordingly focused on individual and group agency across international borders (Bauböck and Faist 2010, 296).

Referencing the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s website dedicated to International Migration, “the concept of trans-nationalism refers to multiple ties

and interactions linking people and institutions across the borders of nation-states” (“Transnationalism” 2017). Transnationalism has even begun to significantly influence the field of international law as the book *Critical International Law: Postrealism, Postcolonialism, and Transnationalism*, explains in the abstract: “transnationalism sees international law not as interstate law, or only as states as the primary subject of law, but appreciates the tremendous power of private actors, NGOs, and non-state actors that reshape the doctrine and function of international law” (Singh and Mayer 2014, i). However, there is still little research into the many aspects of transnationalism. Indeed, in the introduction to the book, *Ties to the Homeland: Second Generation Transnationalism*, which contains a collection of studies on transnationalism, editor Helen Lee states:

However, little research has investigated the intergenerational reproduction of such ties—the connections that migrants’ children maintain with their parents’ homelands. This volume draws together some of this research on second generation transnationalism and presents case studies from a number of migrant groups (Lee 2008, vii).

Using the above quotation as an example, the research on Russian-speaking Estonians clearly highlighted a need for further study on the importance and influence of family, generational aspects of culture and their impact on self-perception. Another example of the lack of research devoted to transnationalism is seen in the lack of results when conducting a search for academic journals dedicated to this study. A search of journals focused on transnationalism available at the Helsinki University online library only returned three results; one of which focused specifically on south-east Asia and another on women of color in transnational roles.<sup>216</sup> There is need of more current and focused research in this area if there is hope for policy makers to have an academic basis from which to assess and evaluate the dynamic and increasingly important field transnationalism.

For this reason, the primary objective of this research is focusing on the people and community in question. By researching how the community perceives its physical surroundings and the social interactions that occur between the surrounding societies, this research provides a better understanding of who the people consider themselves to be and offers an understanding of how this community may shape international relations. However, this research is only partly revealing with regards to transnationalism. Future studies of transnationalism should also take into consideration the study of the virtual space which is

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<sup>216</sup> The three journals found were: *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, *TRaNS: Trans-Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia* and *Portal*.

increasingly functioning like the physical space. As authors Kathrin Kissau and Uwe Hunger state in chapter 13 of *Diaspora and Transnationalism*:

‘Diasporic communities have always relied on networks, which expanded from the immediate local to the transnational and global’ (Georgiou 2002: 3). The internet is now the central framework for such networks, so that observing online structures can provide insights into diasporic community characteristics (Bauböck and Faist 2010, 246).

Mainsah’s earlier referenced study of the virtual space and its role in identity formation and assigning belongingness for Africans in Norway further supports a focus on transnationalism and its impacts in the virtual space. Studying only the virtual aspects however, will fall short of providing a complete understanding of the communities in question. Mainsah himself, discourages a complete shift to analyzing only the virtual space:

However, these spaces are not the same as those encountered by moving physical bodies. Thus although digital diasporas produced through online encounters of global environments can affectively simulate diasporic life and even actually change everyday practices of offline bodies the experience is not fully that of those in the diaspora (2014, 107).

Similarly, UNESCO states that “the notion of trans-national community puts the emphasis on human agency” (“Trans-nationalism” 2017). If the focus is on the people, then a purely virtual research of transnational communities will not be fully revealing. Authors Kissau and Hunger suggest that it is the combination of virtual and physical that must be achieved when studying transnationalism:

One should not make the mistake, however, of studying all these activities solely by analysing the internet. Though online spheres are the extension of offline worlds, they alone do not suffice for a thorough analysis. Field studies of offline realms cannot be replaced, but the internet can add to an overview of different migrant communities’ characteristics. Online and offline worlds interact and are not independent of one another, so that analysing online behaviour allows us to draw conclusions about overall, general interests (also offline) (Bauböck and Faist 2010, 248).

While this specific research focused on the physical aspects of transnationalism, it nevertheless contributed to the larger understanding of transnationalism and its importance and impacts across multiple domains. Future studies of transnationalism, encompassing cross-border relations, majority/minority dynamics and the associated questions of identity and belongingness, should consider how the virtual spaces intersect with the physical aspects of integration and interaction discussed in this research to better understand intercultural encounters that shape and influence identity, belongingness and mobilization. Understanding transnationalism and those who operate in the roles of transnationals such as the interviewees

of this research is a critical step in understanding the increasing importance and long-term impacts of globalization, mass migration and international relations.

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Tiedekunta - Fakultet - Faculty Faculty of Arts	Laitos - Institution - Department Department of World Cultures
Tekijä - Författare - Author Veney, David	
Työn nimi - Arbetets titel - Title Russian-speaking Estonians: Bridging the Gap of Understanding	
Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject Area and Cultural Studies	
Vuosi - År - Year 2018	
Tiivistelmä - Abstrakt - Abstract This research explores the way in which the Russian-speaking community of Narva, Estonia perceives their identity and sense of belongingness in relation to Estonia and Russia through self-reflection. Sixteen interviews with residents of Narva reveal perceptions of discrimination and integration and the surrounding discourses on inclusion and exclusion which define and influence how Russian-speaking Estonians balance their relationship with Russian and Estonian societies. The theoretical framework is composed of psychological and sociological theories which examine the individual and social aspects involved in the relationships the interviewees describe. The research underlines the value in having a deeper understanding of minority populations along critical borders to develop appropriate and effective national-level policies which affect the community, country of residence and country of origin of the minority community. This research aims to add to the existing literature focused on the study of minority communities along critical borders in general and Russian-speaking communities spread across the Post-Soviet Space in particular as well as describe the factors that influence their mobilization and transnationalism.	
Avainsanat - Nyckelord - Keywords transnationalism, diaspora, intercultural encounters, policy, Estonia, Russia, Russian-speaking, interview, discrimination, integration, complex interdependence, Post-Soviet Space, baltics, border relations, minority, belongingness, identity	
Säilytyspaikka - Förvaringsställe - Where deposited Helsingin yliopiston kirjasto - Helda / E-thesis (opinnäytteet)	

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Tekijä - Författare - Author Veney, David	
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Oppiaine - Läroämne - Subject alue- ja kulttuurintutkimus	
Vuosi - År - Year 2018	
<p>Tiivistelmä - Abstrakt - Abstract</p> <p>Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on selvittää millä tavalla venäjää puhuva yhteisö Narvassa, Virossa kokee identiteettinsä ja kuulumisensa Viroon ja Venäjään. Identiteettiä ja kuulumisen tunnetta tarkastellaan itsereflektioissa. Kuudentoista Narvassa asuvan ihmisen haastatteluiden kautta paljastetaan havaintoja heidän syrjinnästään ja integraatiostaan sekä haastatteluista ympäröiviä diskursseja sisällyttämisestä ja syrjäytymisestä, jotka vaikuttavat siihen, miten venäjänkieliset ihmiset tasapainottavat suhdettaan sekä Venäjän että Viron yhteiskuntaan. Teoreettisena viitekehyksenä on psykologisia ja sosiologisia teorioita, jotka tutkivat haastateltavien kuvaamia henkilökohtaisia ja sosiaalisia vaikutuksia suhteissansa. Tutkimus korostaa sitä, miten hyödyllistä on ymmärtää syvästi vähemmistöjä jotka asuvat kriittisillä rajoilla, jotta olisi mahdollista kehittää sopivaa ja tehokasta politiikkaa kansallisella tasolla, mikä vaikuttaa vähemmistöihin, heidän asuttamassaan maassa ja heidän alkuperäisessä kotimaassaan. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on lisätä tietoa tutkimuksen kenttiin, jotka käsittelevät vähemmistöyhteisöä kriittisillä rajoilla ja erityisesti venäjänkielisten yhteisöä, joka on levinnyt entisen Neuvostoliiton läpi sekä kuvailla tekijöitä jotka vaikuttavat heidän mobilisaatioonsa ja transnationalismia.</p>	
<p>Avainsanat - Nyckelord - Keywords</p> <p>transnationalism, diaspora, intercultural encounters, policy, Estonia, Russia, Russian-speaking, interview, discrimination, integration, complex interdependence, Post-Soviet Space, baltics, border relations, minority, belongingness, identity</p>	
<p>Säilytyspaikka - Förvaringsställe - Where deposited</p> <p>Helsingin yliopiston kirjasto - Helda / E-thesis (opinnäytteet)</p>	